

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • RATHBURN • CRABTREE

INVINCIBLE™



VOLUME SIX

A DIFFERENT WORLD

Introduction by Ed Brubaker

WYAP



image® COMICS PRESENTS

INVINCIBLE™

A DIFFERENT WORLD



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& CORY WALKER**

image®



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INVINCIBLE, VOL. 6: A DIFFERENT WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

A year ago, I wasn't even reading *Invincible*. Sure, I'd heard about how good it was, but frankly, I felt there were more than enough superhero books on the market from Marvel and DC, and I didn't feel the need to check out any others. But I was reading *Walking Dead*, because, well... Zombies. Anyway, I'm talking to Robert Kirkman at the Emerald City Comicon in Seattle, and he asks if I've ever read *Invincible*, and proceeds to give me the first three trades. A few days and one marathon comics reading session later, I no longer care about *Walking Dead*. I just want to read more *Invincible*. What the hell is up with that?

Okay, I do still read *Walking Dead*, but *Invincible* is my favorite Kirkman book, by far. And I'm a grim guy a lot of the time. My favorite books and movies tend to be things like "The Killer Inside Me" or "Get Carter." But *Invincible* really taps into the other side of my psyche, the part that loves old John Romita Spider-Man comics, the movies of Miyazaki, *Toy Story*, *Harriet the Spy*... the part of every creative person that is always a bit of a kid. That's what *Invincible* is about, to me. Kirkman found a way to do superhero comics that remind me why I liked them in the first place, without seeming like an actual comic from the 70s or early 80s, most of which are better in memory than in actuality. I really dig reading about Mark Grayson and his friends and fellow superheroes. I dig all the names that Kirkman comes up with for the side heroes of his world (Dupli-Kate? Come on, and her little brother is Multi-Paul. That's gold, solid gold). I dig all the costumes that Cory Walker and then Ryan Ottley put them all in (especially Atom Eve). And I know that eventually Robot will be revealed to be bad... I just know it.

And let's not even talk about how lucky this Kirkman bastard is with artists. I don't know a single writer who wouldn't kill to work with Ryan Ottley. Ryan draws how many panels a page, all of them great, he draws amazing action in every issue, and most importantly, you care about his characters when you watch them talk. People who don't work in comics may not realize that simple part, the facial expressions and body language of the characters when they aren't fighting, is the key ingredient in making a good script great. Ryan is one of the best, and Kirkman is more than lucky to have him. (In fact, Ryan, if you're reading this, call me, buddy, I've got ideas).

You know how big a fan I am of Invincible? I made Robert send me the PDFs of the last three issues of the story collected here even though I never planned on mentioning them in this intro. I just wanted to read them early. But, of course, now I just have longer to wait until the next issue...

**ED
BRUBAKER**

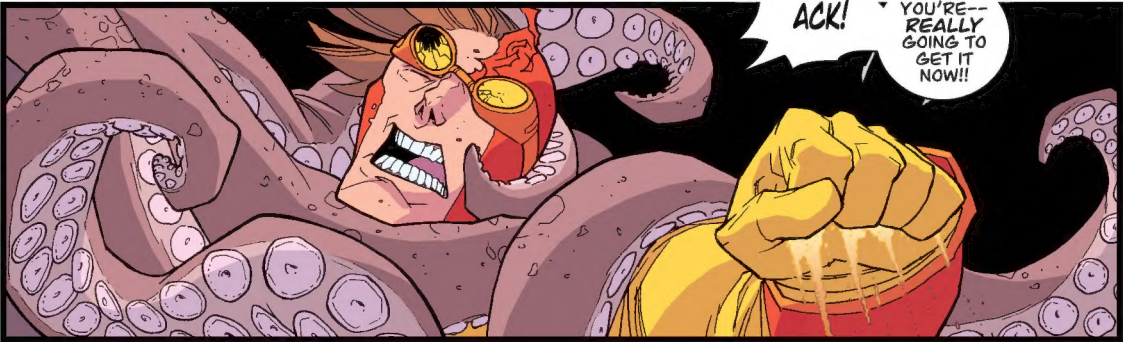
Seattle 2006

Brubaker's credits include — SLEEPER, GOTHAM CENTRAL, SCENE OF THE CRIME, CAPTAIN AMERICA, DAREDEVIL, UNCANNY X-MEN and CRIMINAL

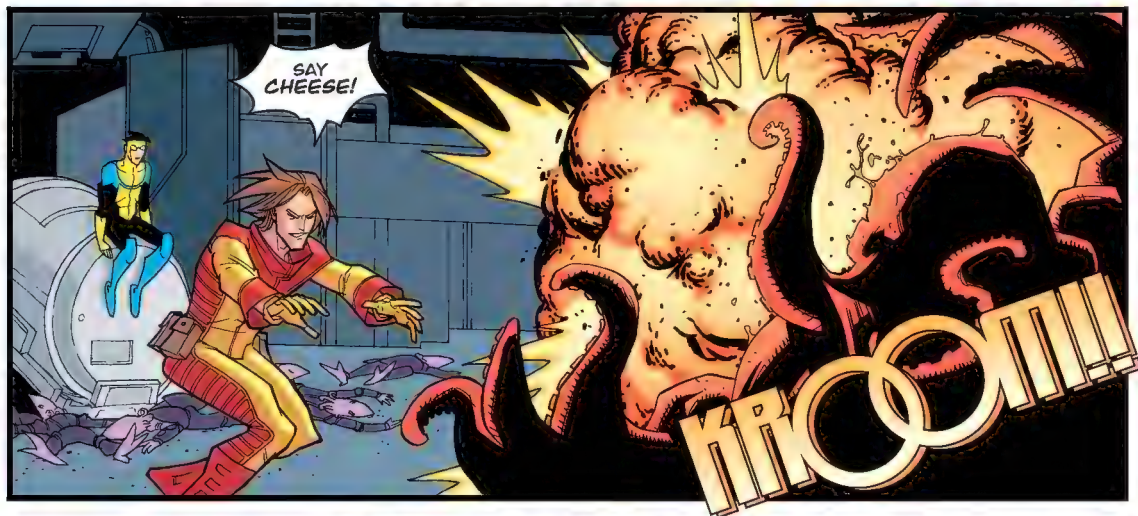
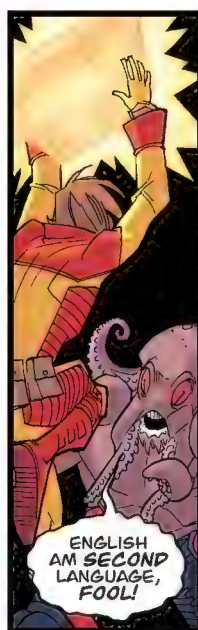
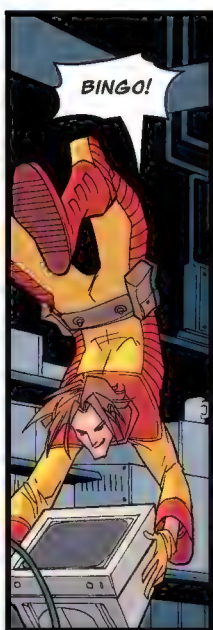
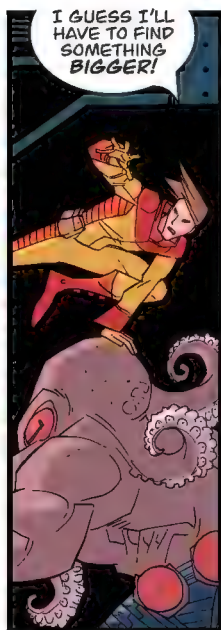
CHAPTER ONE

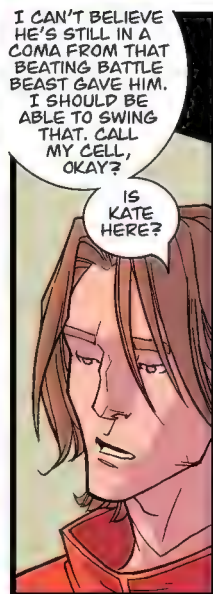
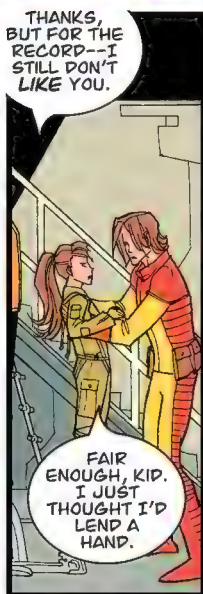
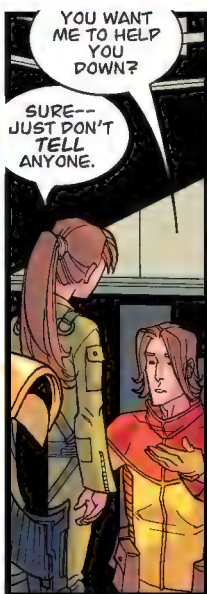
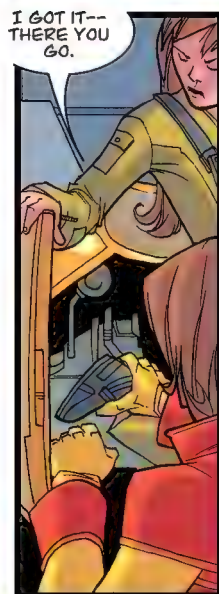
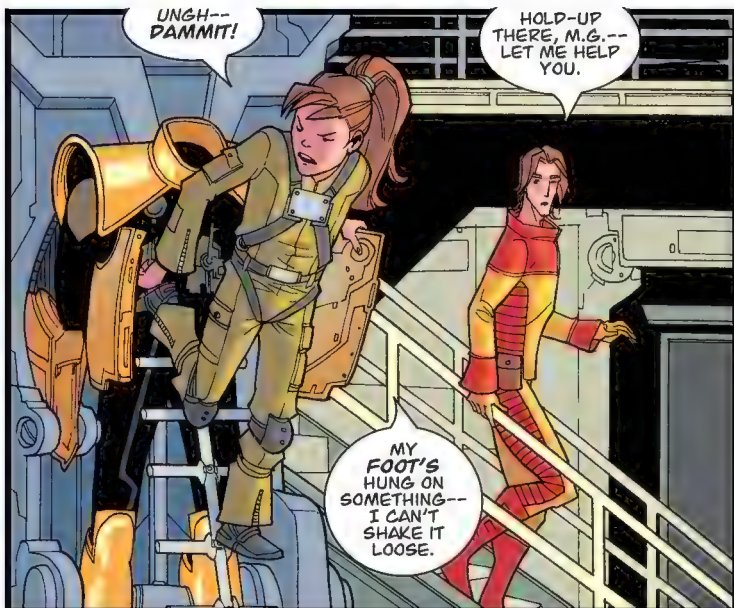


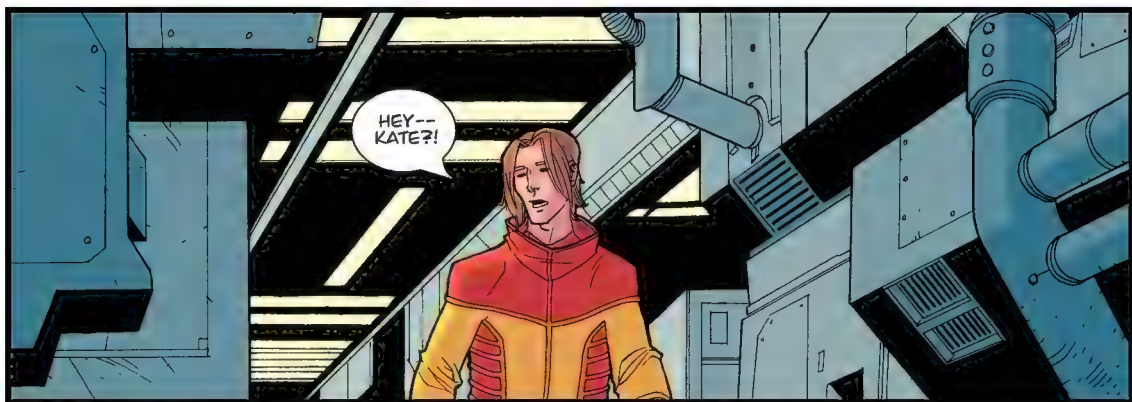


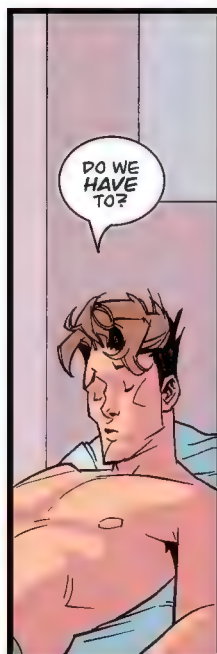
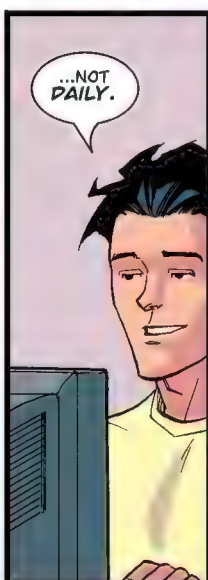
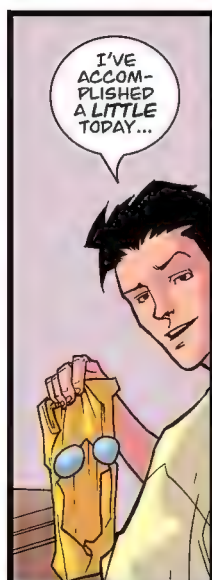


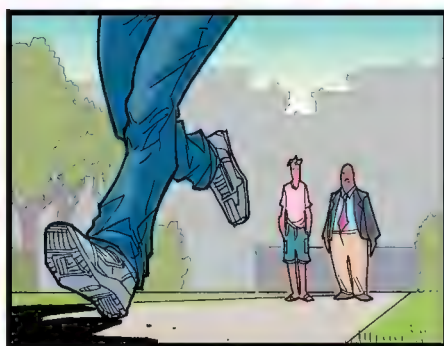
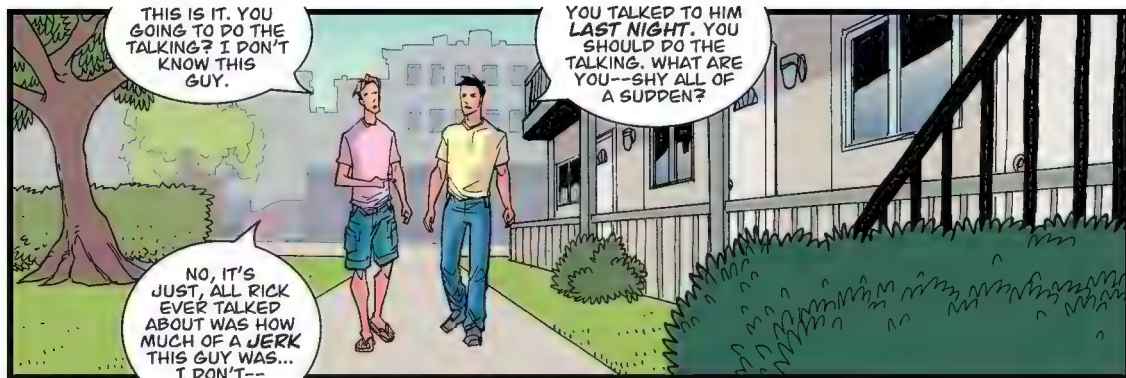












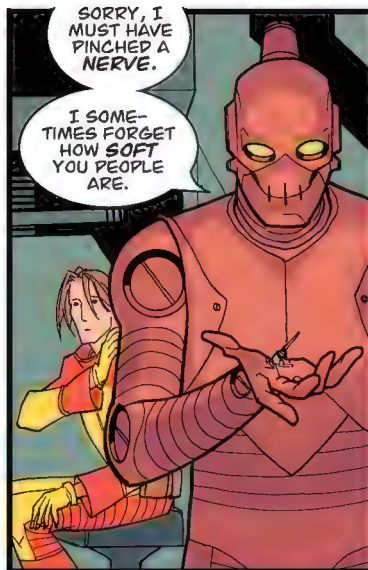
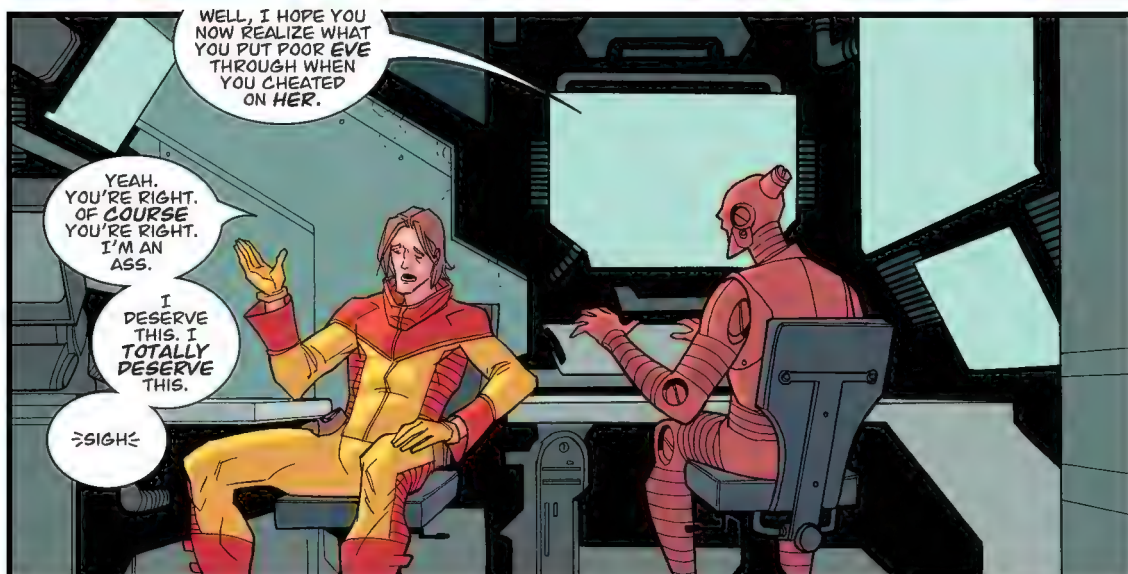




MARK!!

**GET IN
HERE!!!**





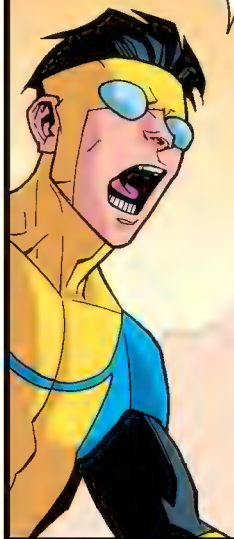
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT,
MARK? HOW
CAN I NOT BE
REAL?

I'M
RIGHT
HERE.



I SEE YOU--
YOU'RE THERE--
BUT YOU'RE NOT
SCIENCE
DOG!!

SCIENCE
DOG IS A
COMIC BOOK
CHARACTER!



EXCUSE
ME? I
THINK I'D
KNOW...

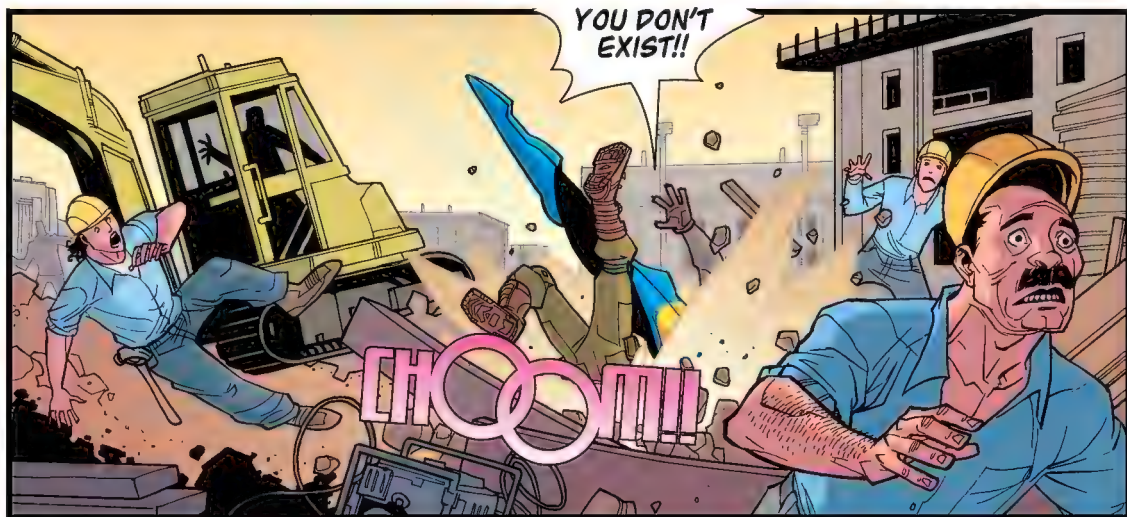


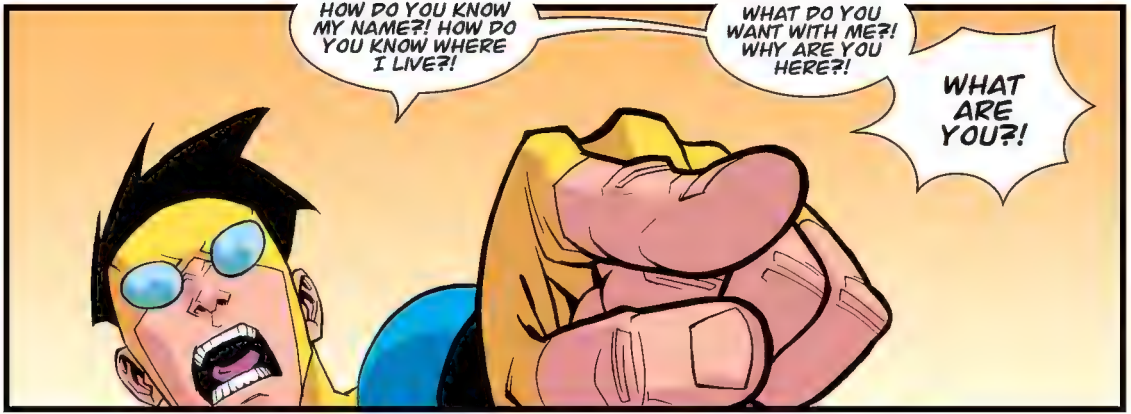
YOU
ARE NOT
REAL!



YOU DON'T
EXIST!!

CHOOOM!!!







OKAY--IS
THIS
BETTER?

NOW--
TALK TO
ME. WHAT
IS GOING
ON?



WE HAVE WATCHED
YOU FROM AFAR--WE
HAVE THE ABILITY TO
SPY ON OTHER PLANETS--
TO WITNESS THE EVENTS
THAT OCCUR
THERE.

AFTER A
WHILE--WE
FOCUSED ON **YOU**.
WE MONITORED YOUR
EVERY ACTION. WE
WITNESSED YOUR
LIFE IN AND OUT OF
COSTUME.

EVENTUALLY, WE LEARNED
OF YOUR LOVE FOR THE
CHARACTER SCIENCE DOG.
WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN
IMAGE YOU WOULD
FIND NON-
THREATENING.



NON-THREAT-
ENING?!

YOU'RE
A SIX-FOOT
TALKING
CARTOON
CHAR-
ACTER!!

WERE
YOU
EXPECTING
A HUG?



WE ARE NOT FULLY
AWARE OF YOUR
CUSTOMS AND
BEHAVIOR. WE
WERE NOT SURE
HOW YOU WOULD
REACT.



FINE--WHAT-
EVER. I DON'T
QUITE UNDER-
STAND THAT
PART BUT
WHATEVER.

WHAT
ABOUT
SPYING ON
ME? WHY
WERE YOU
DOING **THAT?**
WHY DID YOU
NEED TO CON-
TACT ME?
WHY ARE
YOU EVEN
HERE?!



MY PEOPLE ARE IN GREAT
DANGER. OUR PLANET IS
ABOUT TO FALL VICTIM TO A
COSMIC THREAT. WE ARE
A HIGHLY ADVANCED PEOPLE
BUT WE DO NOT POSSESS
THE MEANS TO SAVE
OURSELVES.

WE
BELIEVE
YOU
DO.

OKAY, THAT PART, AT LEAST, MAKES SENSE.

JUST WANT TO LET YOU KNOW I'M LISTENING IN, KID.

WE'RE AIMING A SATELLITE AT YOU RIGHT NOW--SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO TAKE OFF THE MASK SO WE CAN GET A SHOT OF HIM.

THEN WE CAN COMPARE IT TO KNOWN ALIEN RACES IN OUR DATABASE.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN--OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION COULD BE WIPED OUT--OR SAVED--

--BY YOU.

IF I CAN HELP--I WILL. I WOULD NEVER ALLOW ANYTHING TO DIE IF I COULD PREVENT IT.

BUT SHOW ME--WHAT DO YOU LOOK LIKE NORMALLY--HOW ARE YOU MASKING YOUR IDENTITY SO PERFECTLY?

THIS IS A SYNTHETIC EXOSKELETON SHELL--IT IS ALSO WHAT PROTECTED ME FROM YOUR ATTACK.

WE CAN PROGRAM THESE TO TAKE ANY SHAPE--REPLICATE ANY SUBSTANCE.

OUR RESEARCH INDICATED THAT YOUR PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO SPECIES WITH BIOLOGY DISSIMILAR TO YOUR OWN.

WELL--I'VE SEEN A FEW MORE ALIENS THAN MOST HUMANS HAVE--

--OH, AND I'M NOT EXACTLY HUMAN MYSELF.

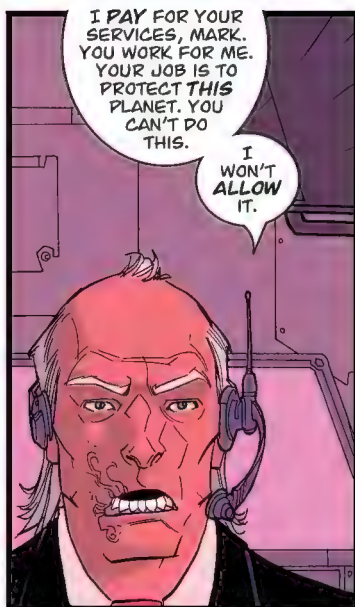
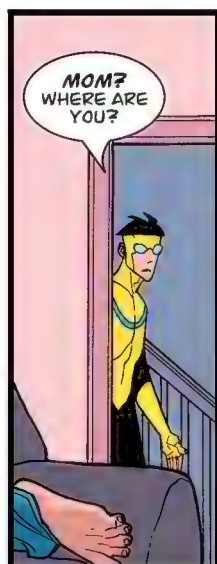
YES, WE OBSERVED YOUR ABILITIES TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE THAN THOSE OF OTHER BEINGS ON THIS PLANET. THAT IS WHY WE SINGLED YOU OUT.

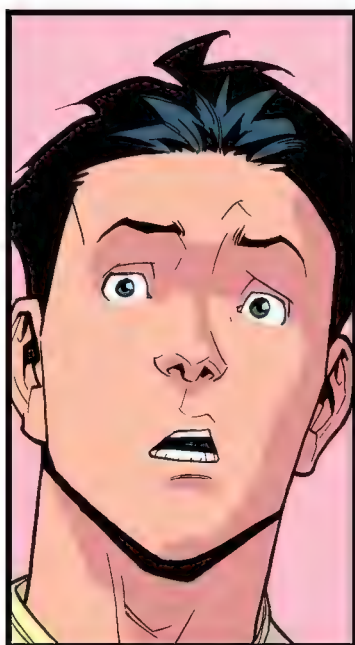
WILL YOU HELP US, MARK GRAYSON OF EARTH?

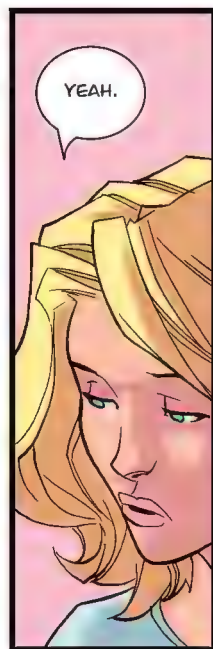
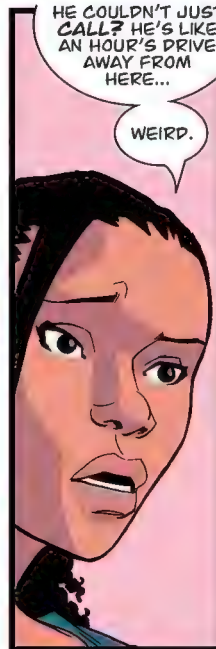
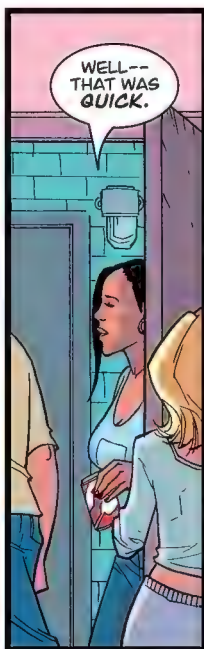
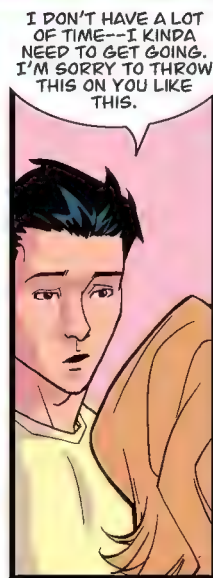
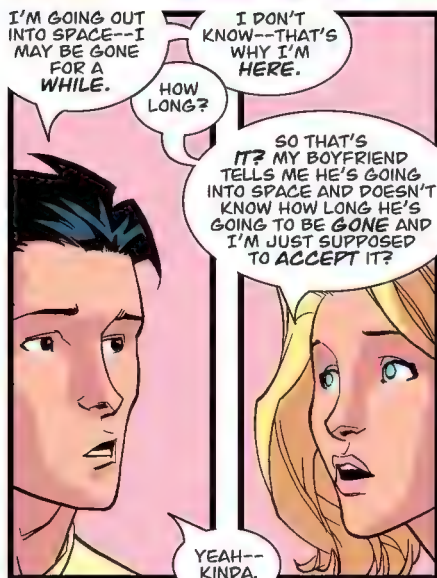
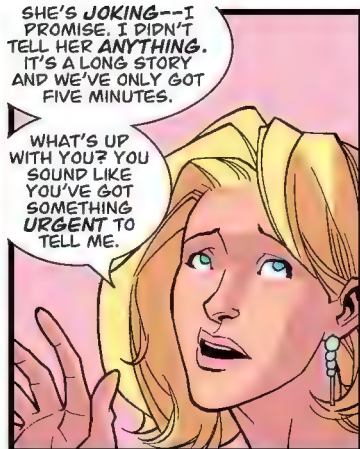
OF COURSE I WILL. BUT I NEED TO EXPLAIN TO MY MOTHER WHAT'S GOING ON AND TELL PEOPLE WHERE I'LL BE. WILL YOU GIVE ME SOME TIME TO DO THAT?

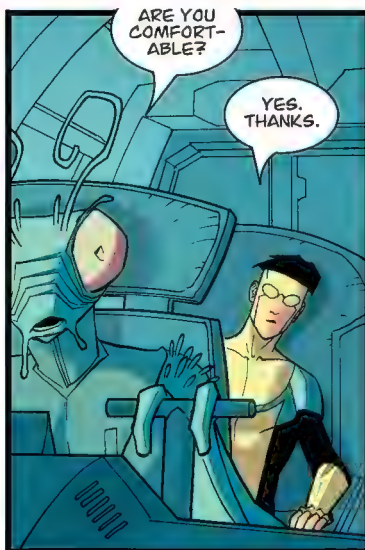
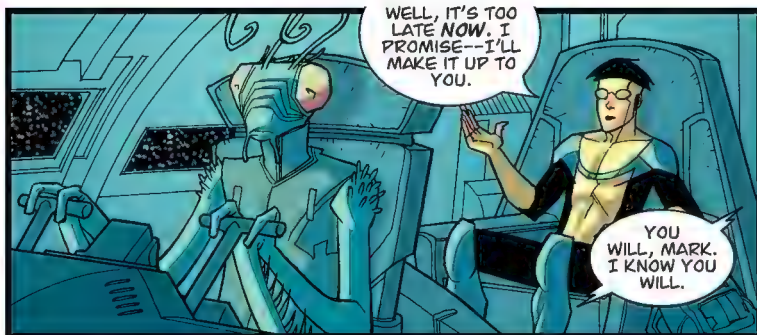
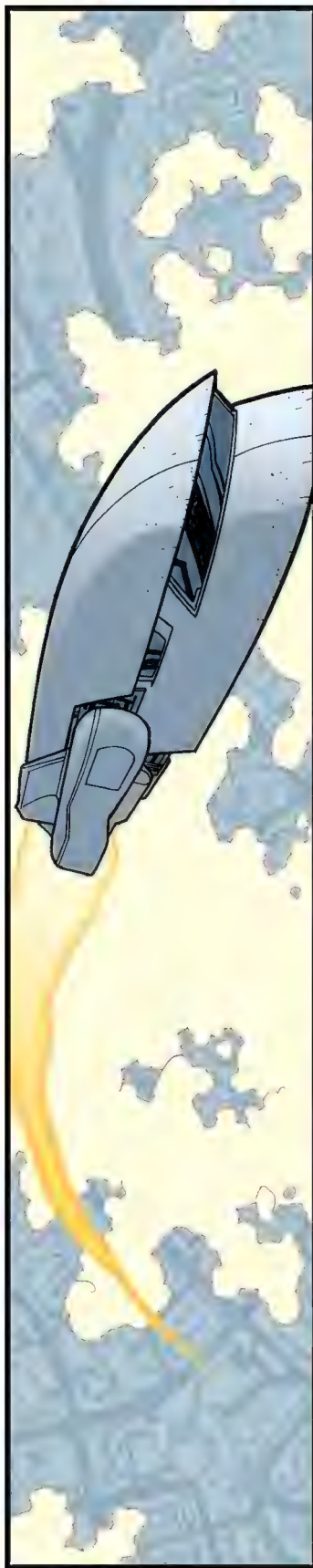
I CAN MEET YOU BACK HERE IN--TWENTY MINUTES OR SO?

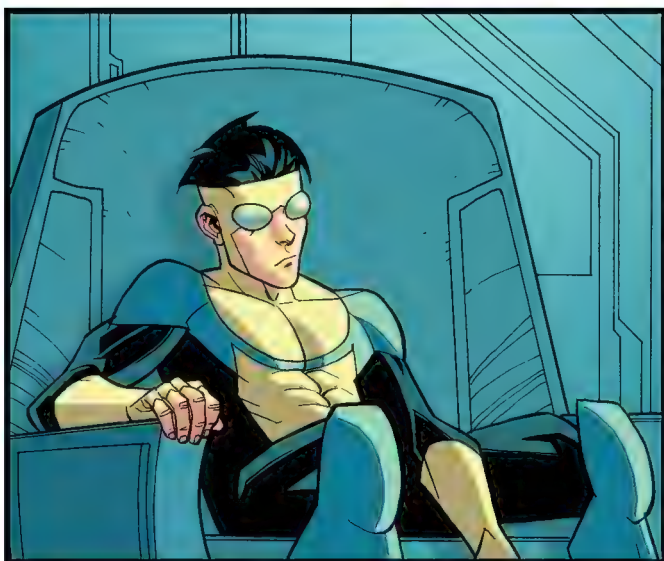
THAT IS ACCEPTABLE.

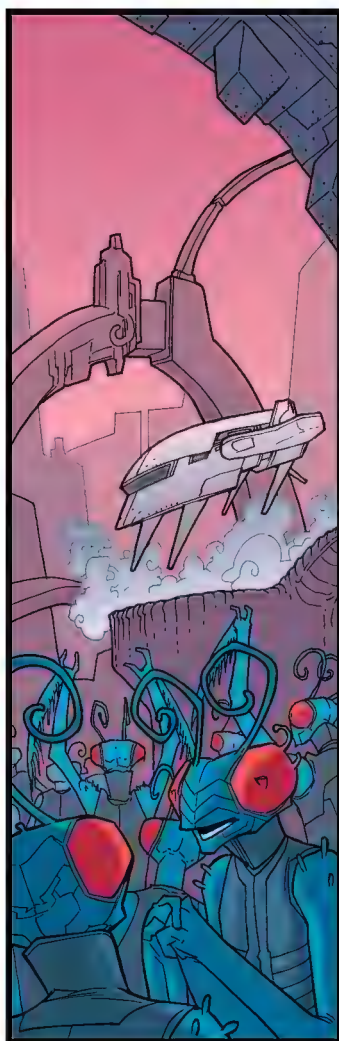
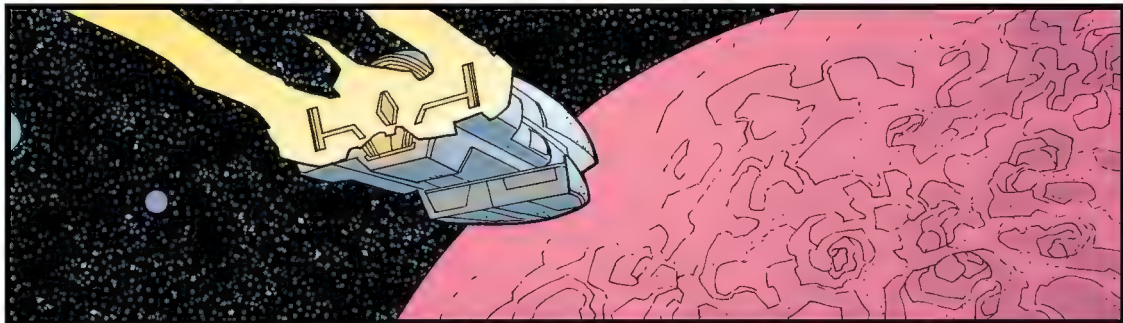




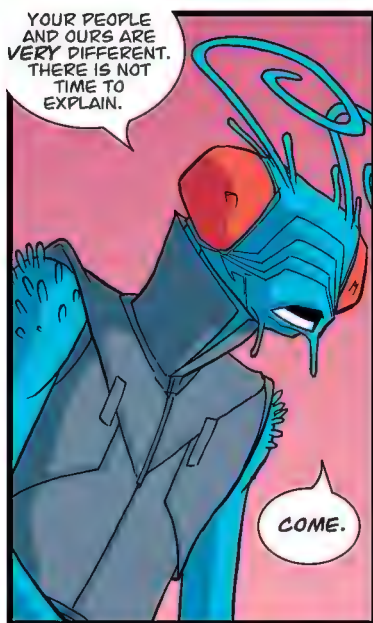
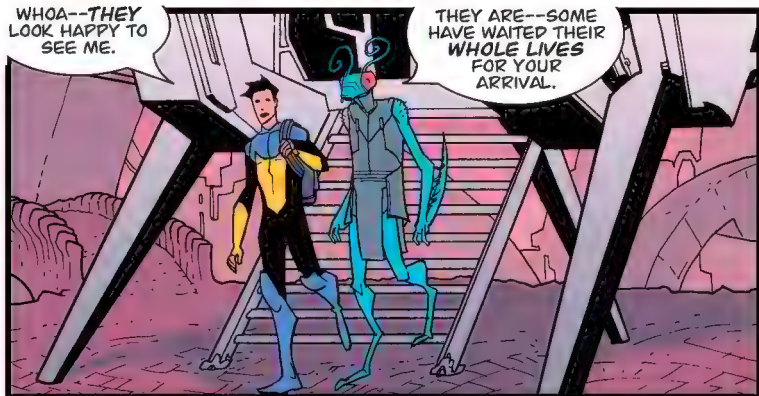


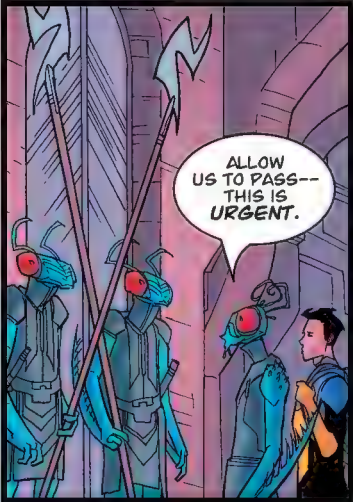
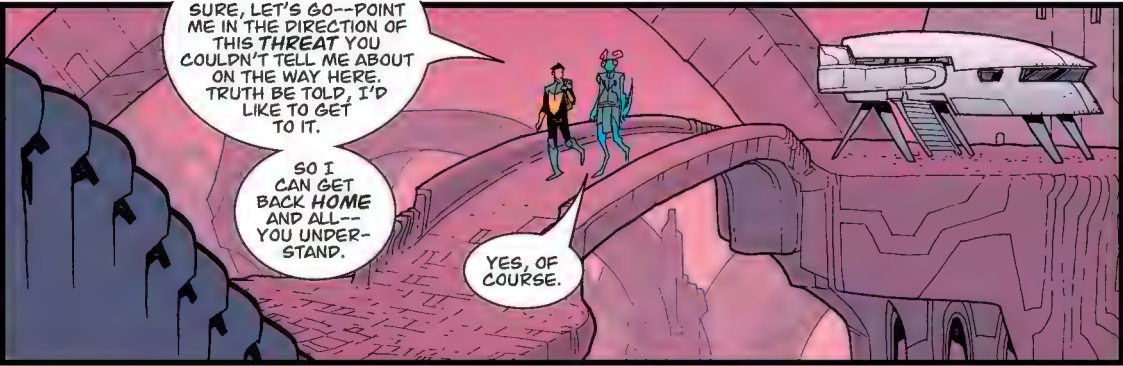






WHOA--THEY
LOOK HAPPY TO
SEE ME.







HELLO,
SON. IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

YOU'RE
LOOKING
WELL.

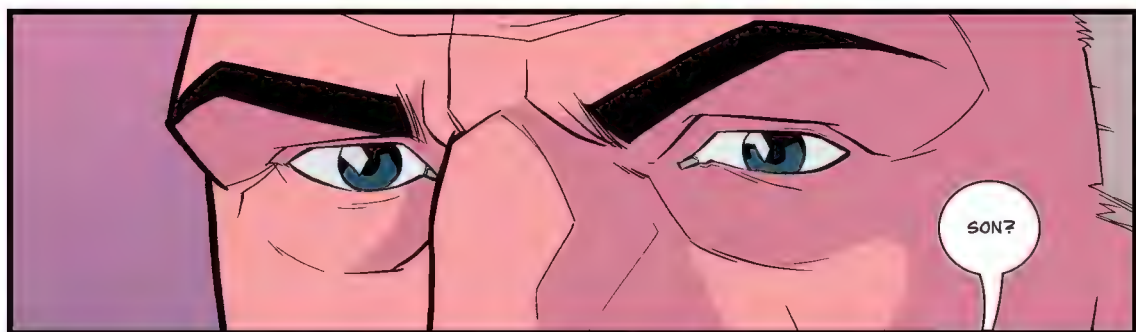
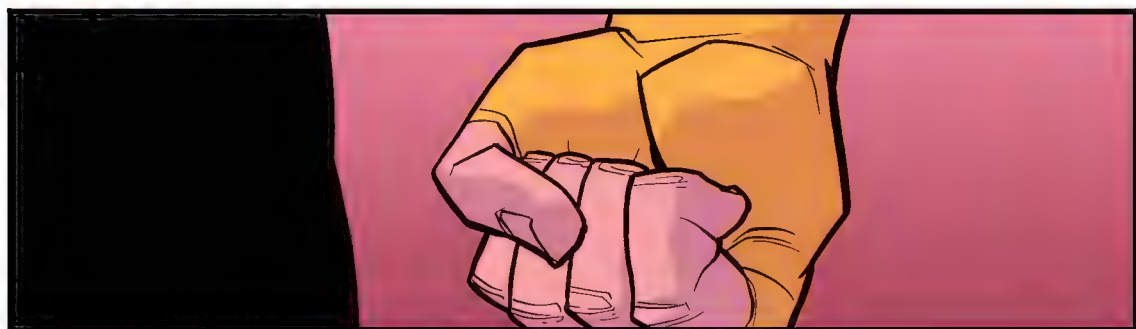


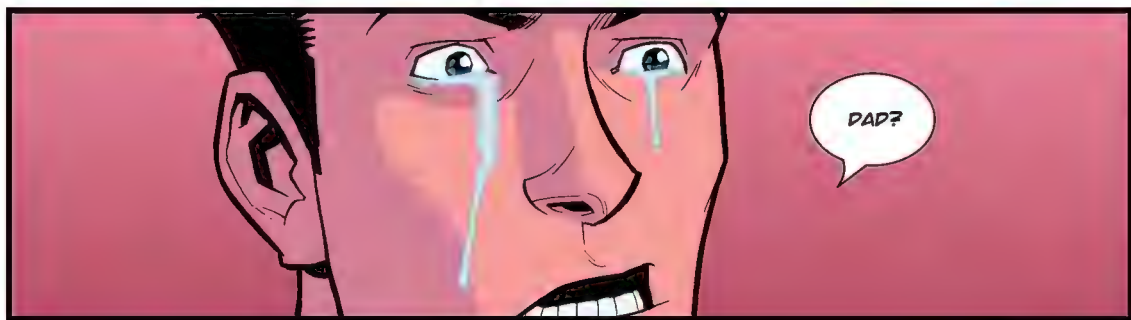
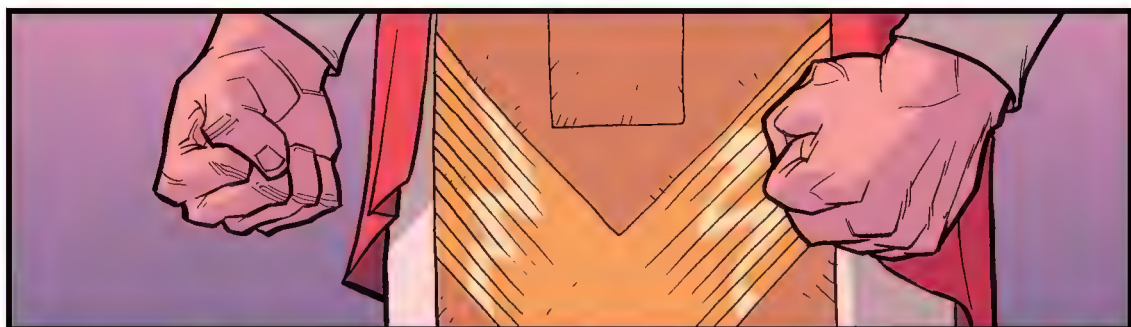
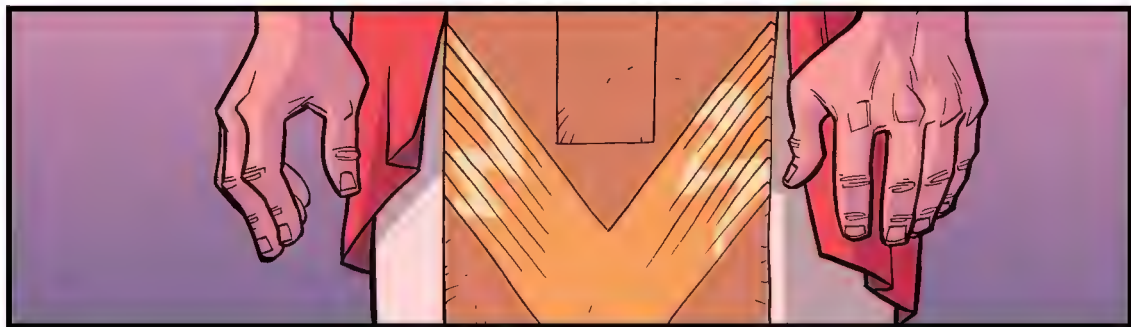
CHAPTER TWO



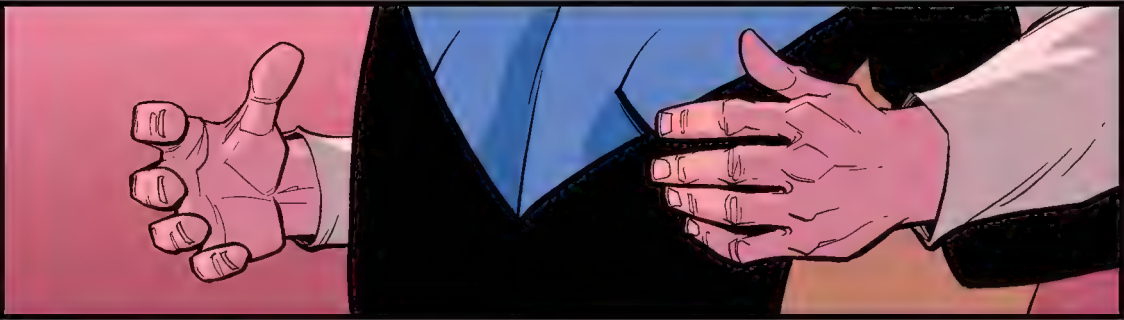
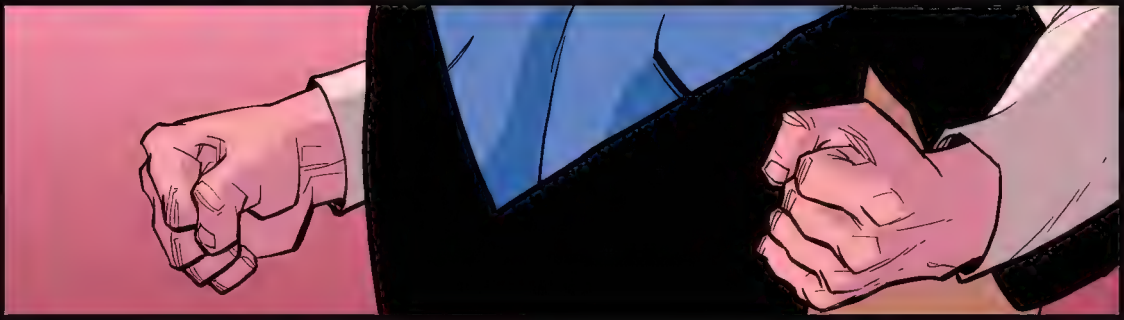
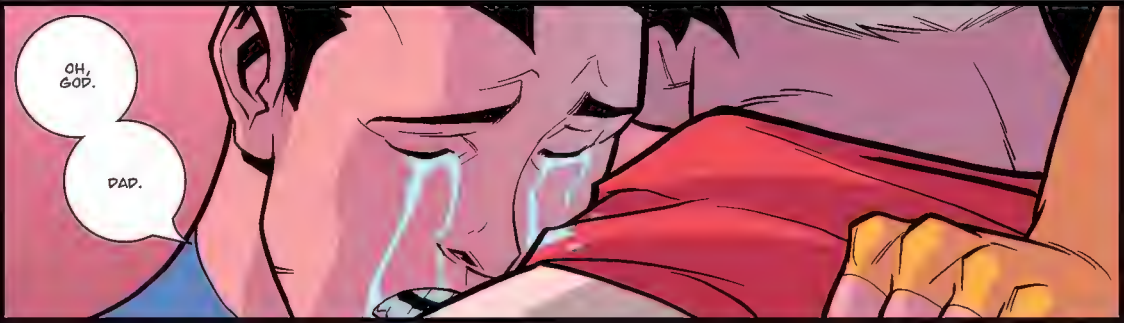


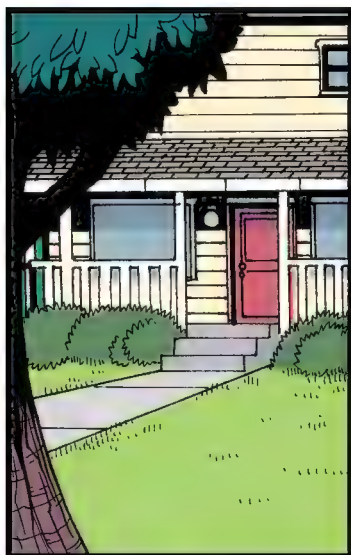
DAD?











OKAY--I THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING. I CAN DO A LITTLE STUDYING AT RED LIGHTS ON THE WAY--AND I'LL HAVE TWENTY MINUTES ONCE I GET THERE TO LOOK OVER THINGS ONE LAST TIME BEFORE THE EXAM STARTS.

YOU'RE GOING TO PASS, DEBBIE. DON'T WORRY--YOU'RE GOING TO PASS.



GREETINGS FROM THE US GOVERNMENT.

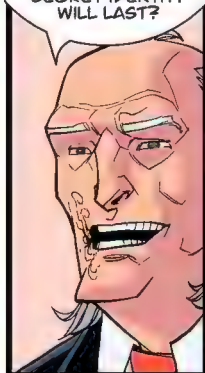


MISTER STEPMAN! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO TELEPORT DIRECTLY INTO THE HOUSE?



YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE SOMEONE A HEART ATTACK.

MISS GRAYSON. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME CECIL? BESIDES, IF I START TELEPORTING INTO THE FRONT LAWN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR SON'S SECRET IDENTITY WILL LAST?

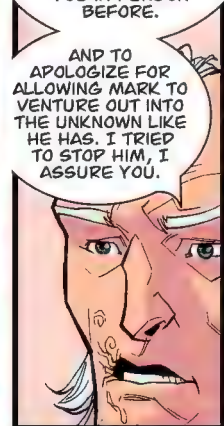


I WOULD STILL PREFER YOU USED THE BACK YARD OR GARAGE OR SOMETHING.



WHAT IS IT YOU'RE HERE FOR? MARK IS STILL IN SPACE, ISN'T HE?

SO YOU DID GET MY MESSAGE. I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY THIS PAST WEEK AND I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR NOT CONTACTING YOU IN PERSON BEFORE.

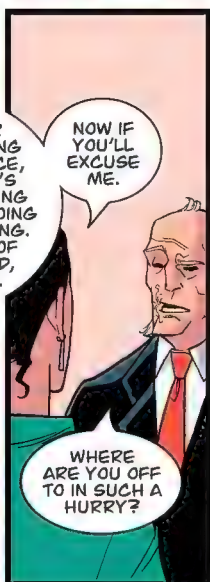


AND TO APOLOGIZE FOR ALLOWING MARK TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN LIKE HE HAS. I TRIED TO STOP HIM, I ASSURE YOU.

THE MAN WHO DELIVERED THE MESSAGE, DONALD--I THINK, WAS VERY KIND.



AND AS FAR AS MARK GOING OUT INTO SPACE, HE THINKS IT'S THE RIGHT THING AND SO HE'S DOING THE RIGHT THING. I'M PROUD OF HIM. WORRIED, BUT PROUD.



NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO IN SUCH A HURRY?

I'VE GOT THE FINAL EXAM FOR MY REAL ESTATE CLASS TODAY. I THOUGHT YOU GOVERNMENT TYPES KNEW EVERYTHING.

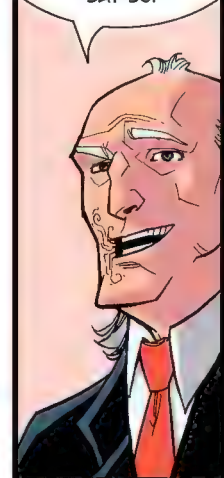


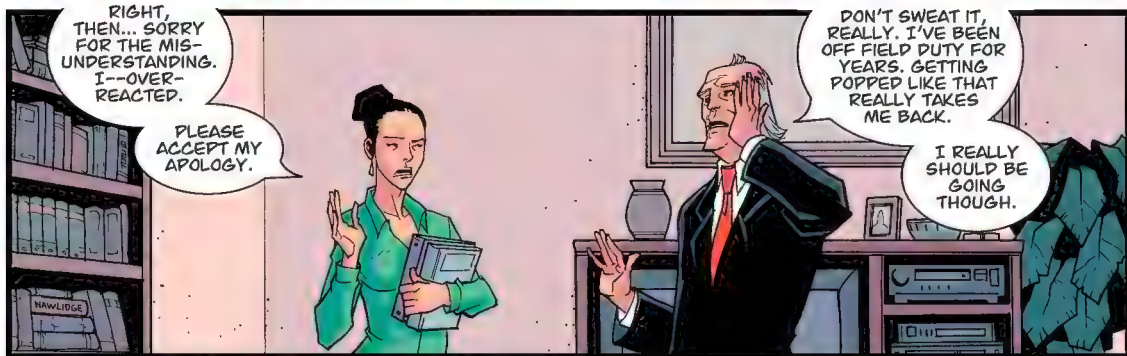
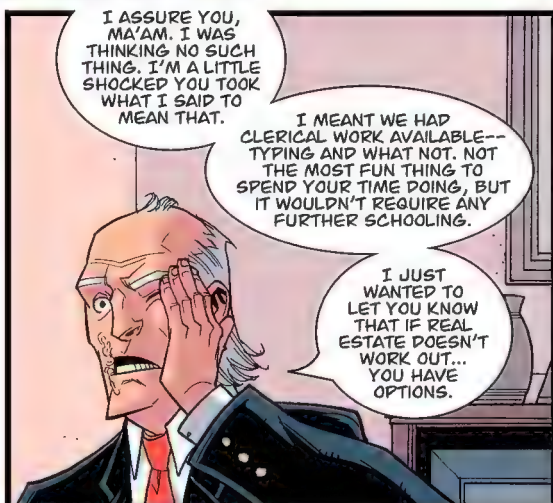
REAL ESTATE--AREN'T WE PAYING YOU ENOUGH?

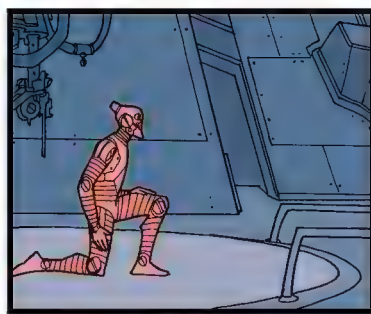
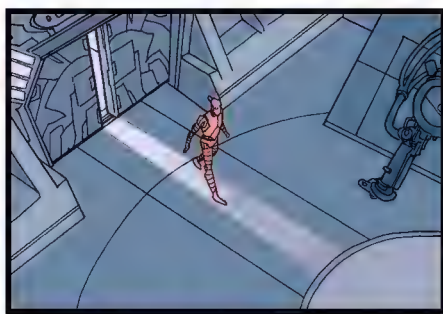
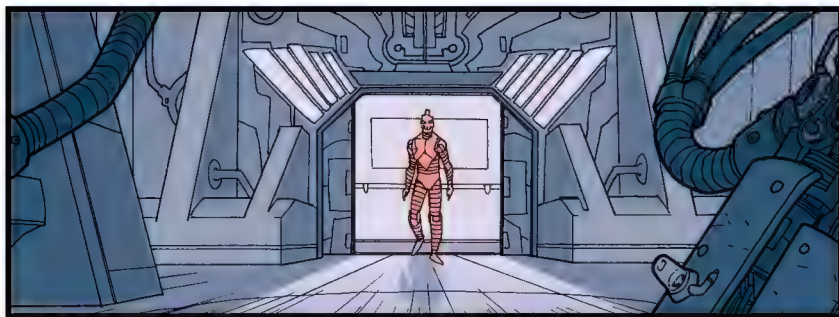
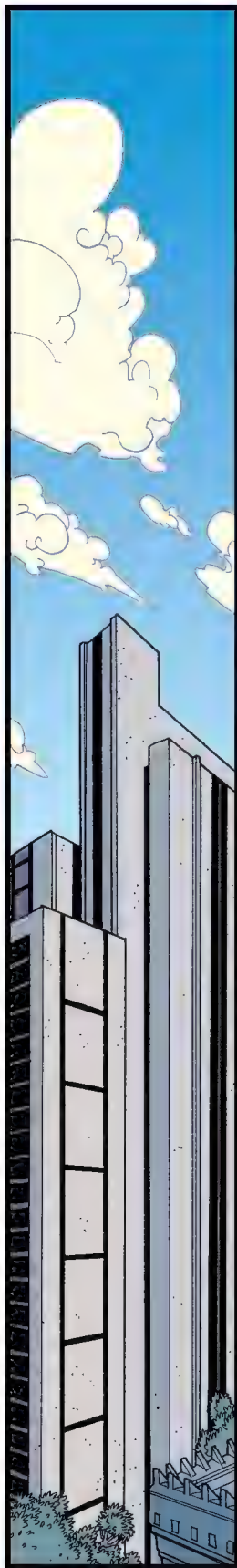
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. I JUST NEED SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY TIME. SOMETHING TO KEEP ME BUSY.

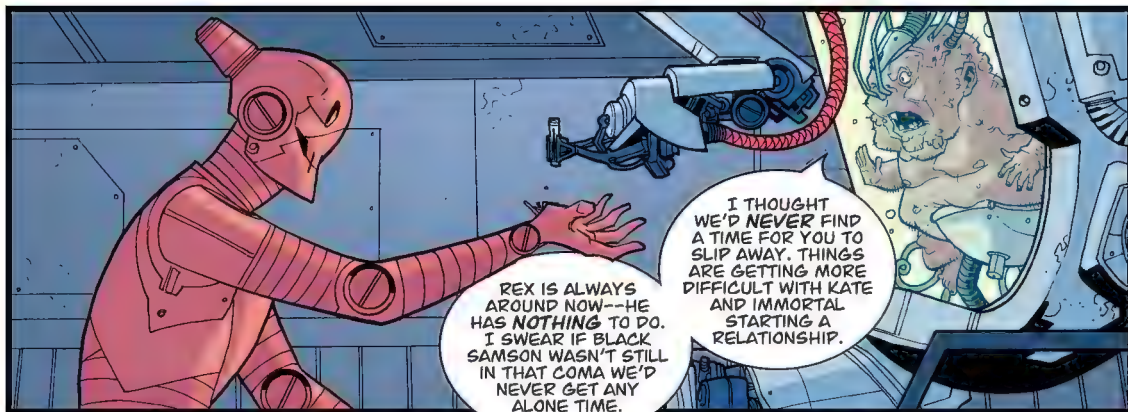


WHY, MISS GRAYSON--IF YOU WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO EARN THAT MONEY--ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SAY SO.



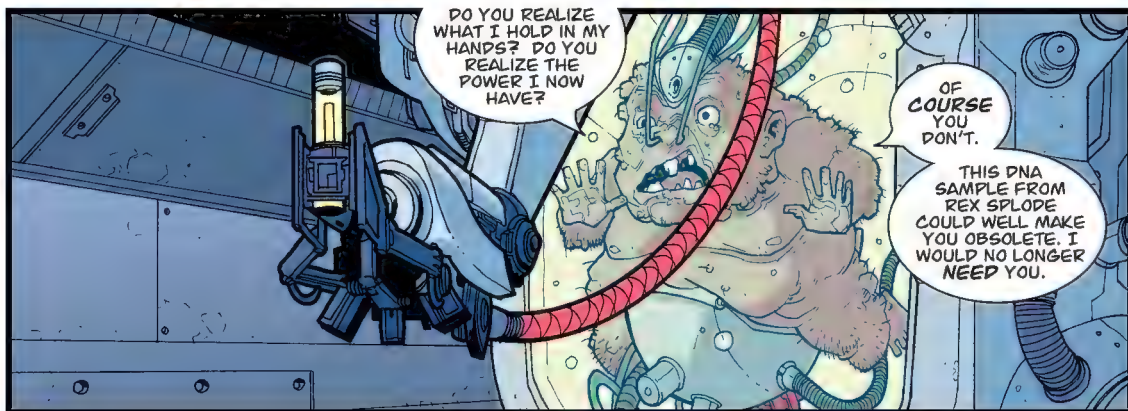






REX IS ALWAYS AROUND NOW--HE HAS **NOTHING** TO DO. I SWEAR IF BLACK SAMSON WASN'T STILL IN THAT COMA WE'D NEVER GET ANY ALONE TIME.

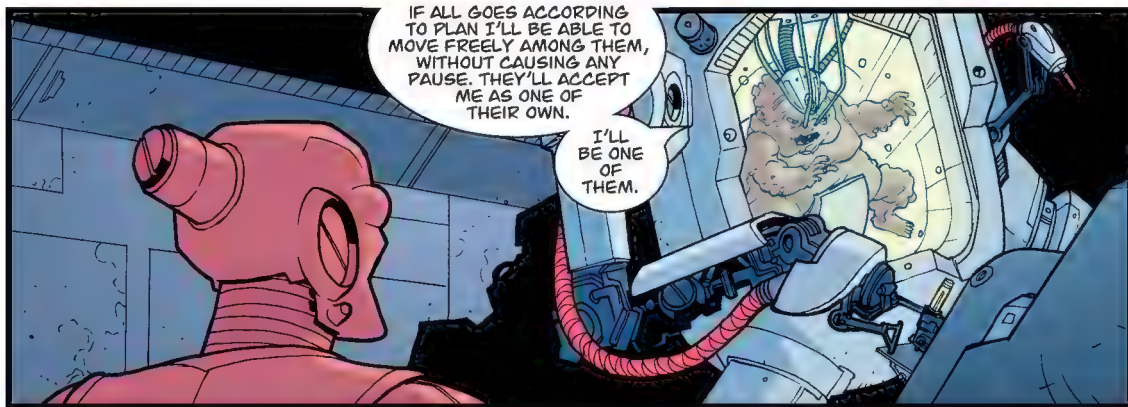
I THOUGHT WE'D NEVER FIND A TIME FOR YOU TO SLIP AWAY. THINGS ARE GETTING MORE DIFFICULT WITH KATE AND IMMORTAL STARTING A RELATIONSHIP.



DO YOU REALIZE WHAT I HOLD IN MY HANDS? DO YOU REALIZE THE POWER I NOW HAVE?

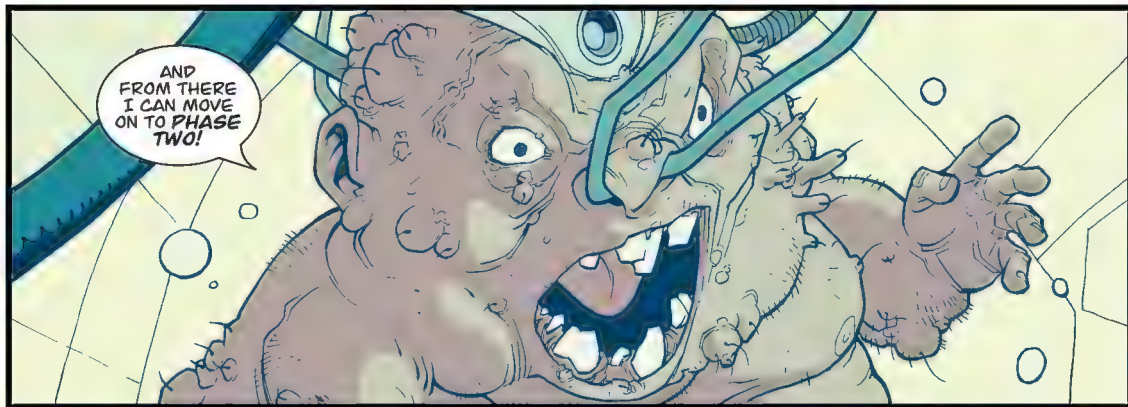
OF COURSE YOU DON'T.

THIS DNA SAMPLE FROM REX SPOLODE COULD WELL MAKE YOU OBSOLETE. I WOULD NO LONGER NEED YOU.

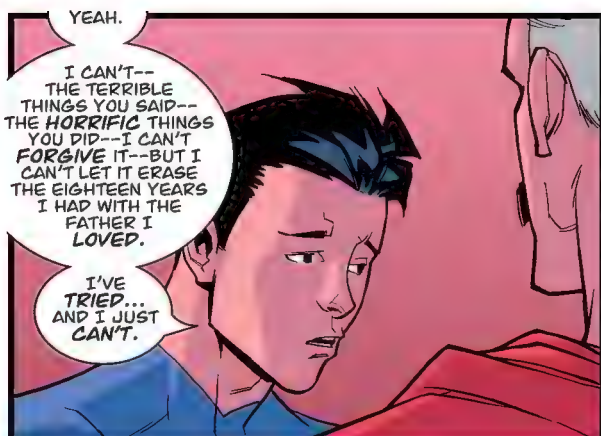


IF ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN I'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY AMONG THEM, WITHOUT CAUSING ANY PAUSE. THEY'LL ACCEPT ME AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.

I'LL BE ONE OF THEM.



AND FROM THERE I CAN MOVE ON TO PHASE TWO!



I LIVED AS A VILTRUMITE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE I CAME TO EARTH--BUT WHAT LITTLE TIME I SPENT THERE--CHANGED ME.

I WAS READY TO KILL YOU WHEN YOU DEFIED ME. I WOULD HAVE. THOSE ARE THE WAYS OF THE VILTRUMITE.

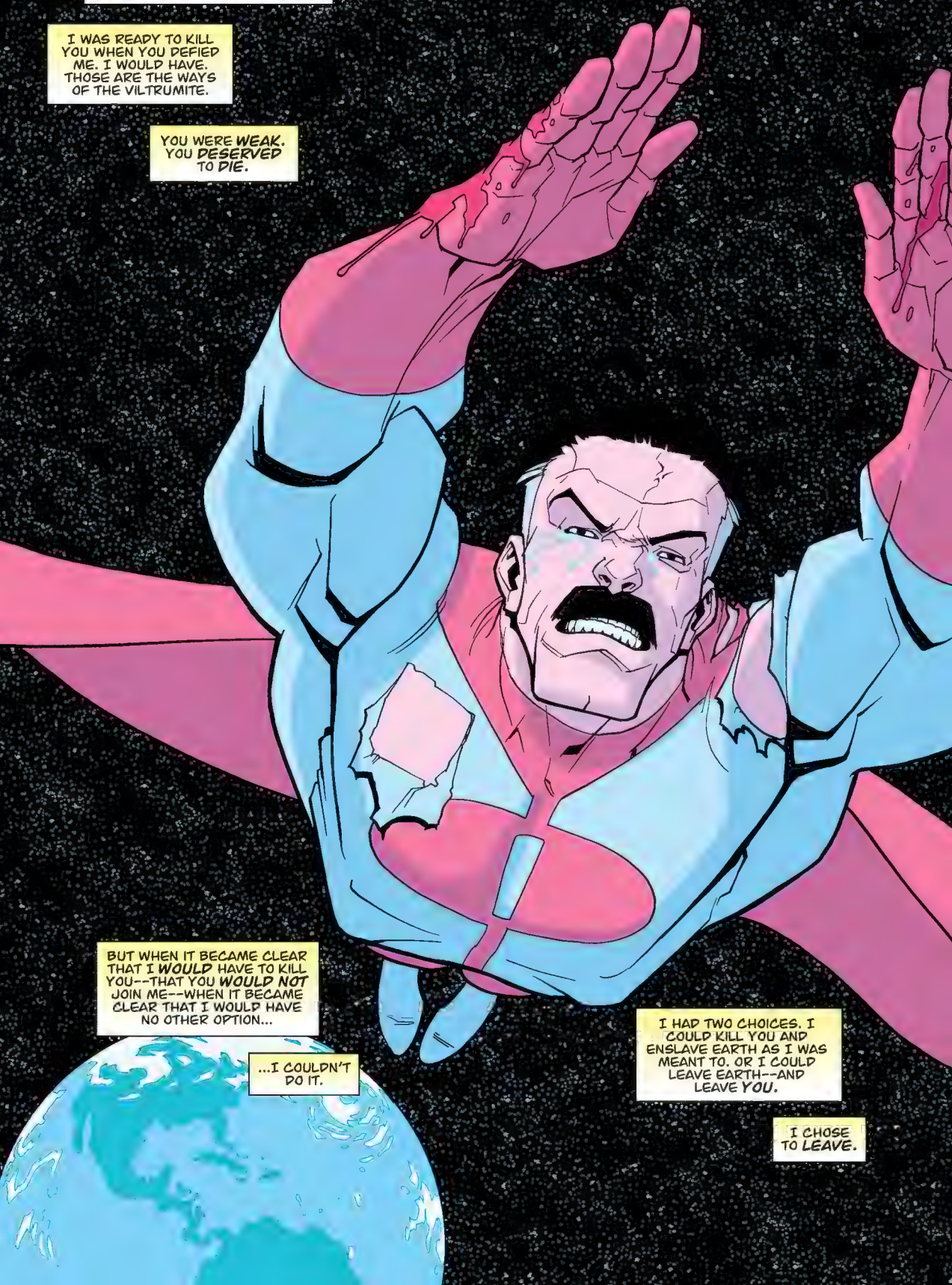
YOU WERE WEAK. YOU DESERVED TO DIE.


BUT WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE TO KILL YOU--THAT YOU WOULD NOT JOIN ME--WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE NO OTHER OPTION...

...I COULDN'T DO IT.

I HAD TWO CHOICES. I COULD KILL YOU AND ENSLAVE EARTH AS I WAS MEANT TO. OR I COULD LEAVE EARTH--AND LEAVE YOU.


I CHOSE TO LEAVE.





IT WAS NOT A DECISION
MADE LIGHTLY. I DECIDED
TO TURN MY BACK ON MY
VILTRUMITE HERITAGE.

MY OFFENSE WOULD
HAVE BEEN NO GREATER
HAD I LISTENED TO YOU
AND CEASED OUR FIGHT
INSTANTLY.




I WAS A FUGITIVE FROM
MY OWN PEOPLE. IT WOULD
ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME
BEFORE THEY LEARNED OF
MY TREACHERY.

I CHOSE TO HIDE RATHER
THAN TURN MYSELF IN. IF I
COULD CONQUER A SIMILAR
WORLD MAYBE THEY WOULD
LESSEN MY PUNISHMENT.



SO I SET OUT
TO FIND SUCH
A WORLD.



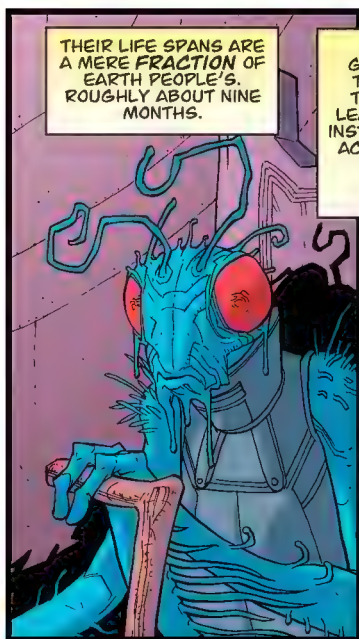
WHETHER THROUGH SOME KIND
OF COSMIC DESTINY OR MERE
LUCK I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT I
FOUND THIS WORLD WITHIN A
WEEK OF LEAVING EARTH.



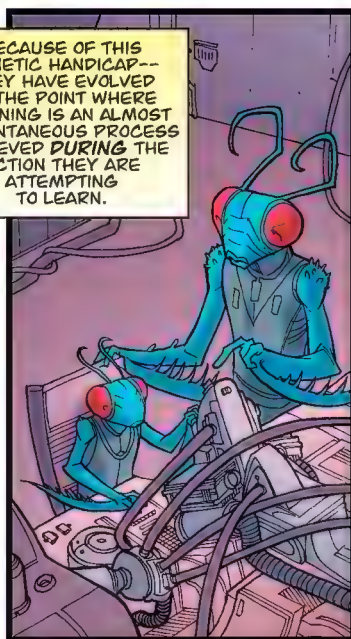
THEY ARE A PEOPLE VASTLY DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF EARTH. THOUGH THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCEMENT AS A SPECIES ARE VERY SIMILAR.

IN SOME WAYS THEY ARE LESS ADVANCED. IN OTHER WAYS, THEY ARE MORE ADVANCED.

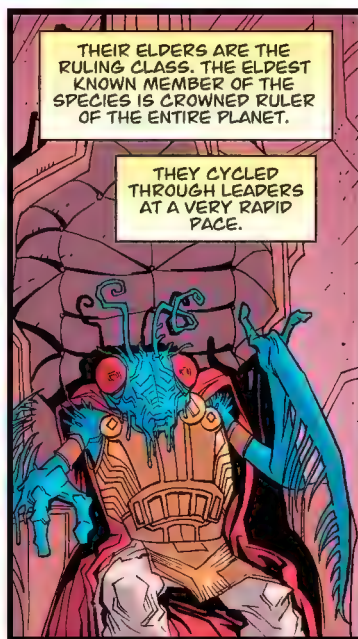
I DECIDED ON THIS WORLD ALMOST INSTANTLY.



THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE A MERE FRACTION OF EARTH PEOPLE'S. ROUGHLY ABOUT NINE MONTHS.



BECAUSE OF THIS GENETIC HANDICAP-- THEY HAVE EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE LEARNING IS AN ALMOST INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS ACHIEVED DURING THE ACTION THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEARN.



THEIR ELDERS ARE THE RULING CLASS. THE ELDEST KNOWN MEMBER OF THE SPECIES IS CROWNED RULER OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.

THEY CYCLED THROUGH LEADERS AT A VERY RAPID PACE.



NEEDLESS TO SAY IT WAS INCREDIBLY EASY TO ASSUME CONTROL OF THIS PLANET. ONCE THEY LEARNED HOW OLD I WAS--I WAS ELECTED RULER ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

THINGS MOVE VERY FAST HERE.



THEY JUST HANDED
THE WHOLE PLANET
OVER TO YOU? NO
QUESTIONS
ASKED?



YES, SON--
THEY DID.

THINGS ARE
VERY DIFFERENT
HERE, MARK. THEIR
LIFE SPAN ACCOUNTS
FOR A GREAT MANY
DIFFERENCES.

AFTER NINE
MONTHS HERE,
NO ONE WILL BE
ALIVE TO REMEMBER
HOW THEIR PLANET
WAS BEFORE MY
RULE. THINK ABOUT
THAT.

YOU OUL
LIVE AN ENTIRE
GENERATION
IN HALF A
YEAR.

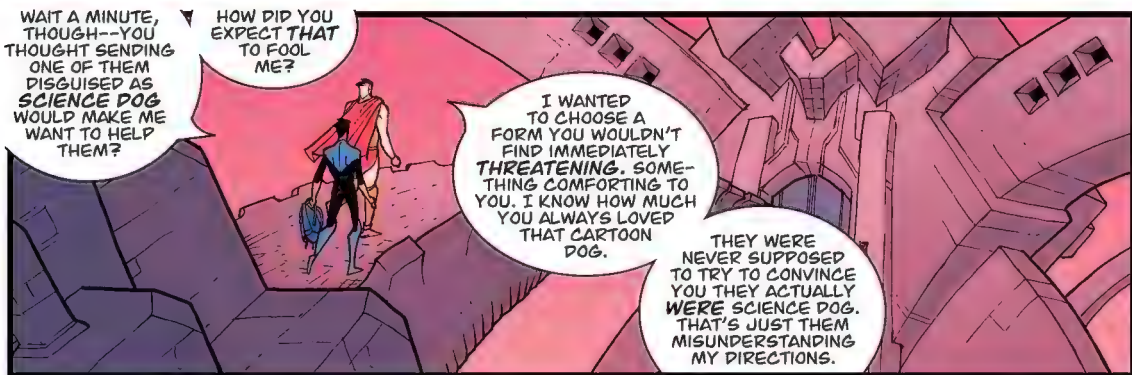
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE
RIGHT. I CAN SEE
HOW THAT WOULD
MAKE A TAKEOVER
EASIER TO
ACCEPT.



COME.
THERE
IS STILL
MUCH TO
DISCUSS.

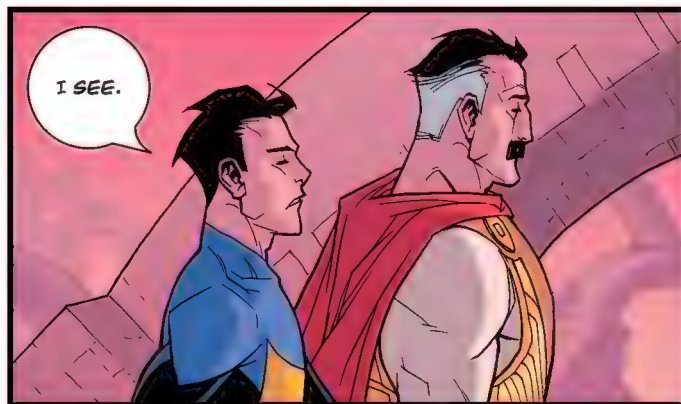
WAIT A MINUTE,
THOUGH--YOU
THOUGHT SENDING
ONE OF THEM
DISGUISED AS
SCIENCE DOG
WOULD MAKE ME
WANT TO HELP
THEM?

HOW DID YOU
EXPECT THAT
TO FOOL
ME?

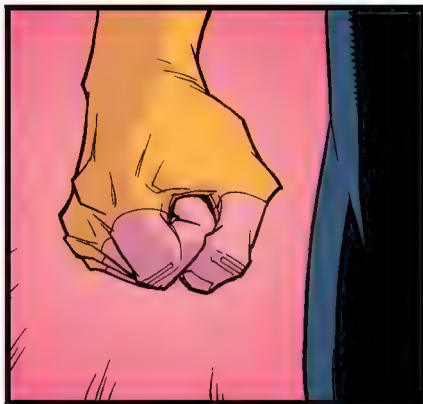


I WANTED
TO CHOOSE A
FORM YOU WOULDN'T
FIND IMMEDIATELY
THREATENING. SOME-
THING COMFORTING TO
YOU. I KNOW HOW MUCH
YOU ALWAYS LOVED
THAT **CARTOON**
DOG.

THEY WERE
NEVER SUPPOSED
TO TRY TO CONVINCE
YOU THEY ACTUALLY
WERE **SCIENCE DOG**.
THAT'S JUST THEM
MISUNDERSTANDING
MY DIRECTIONS.

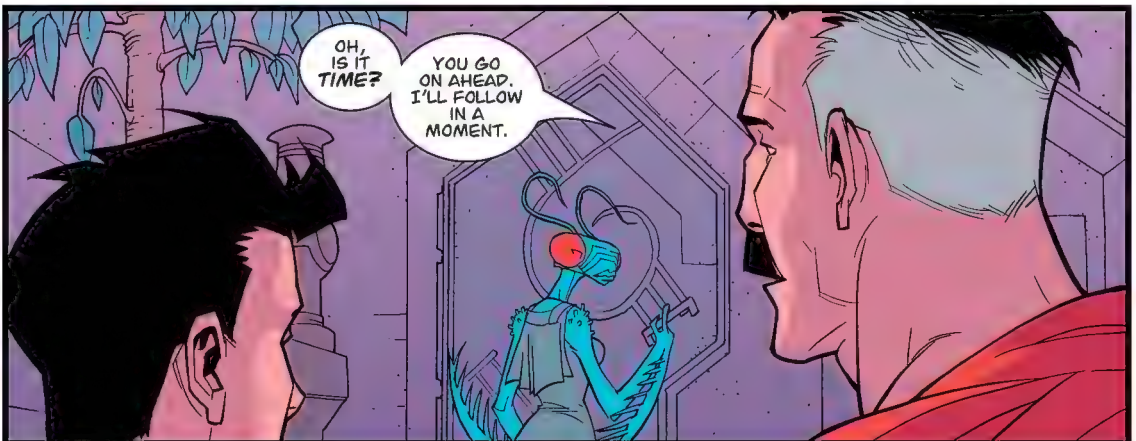


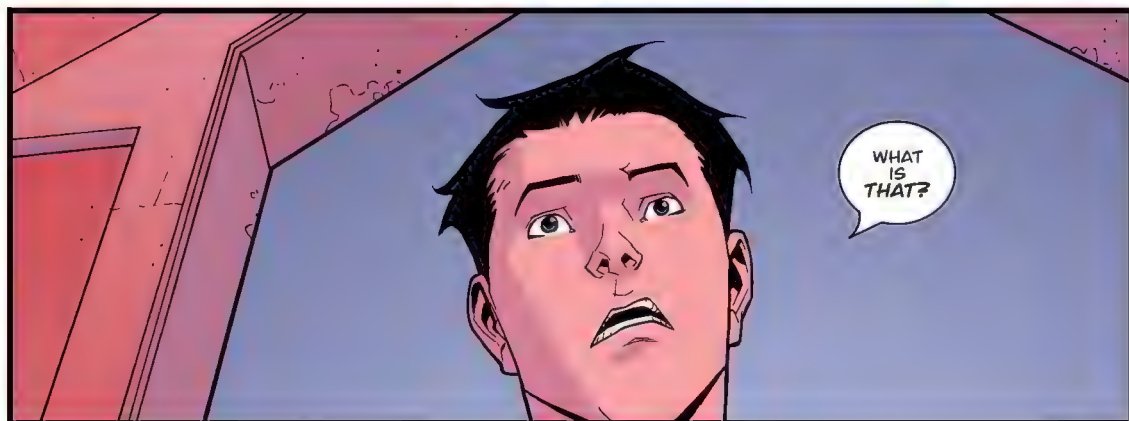
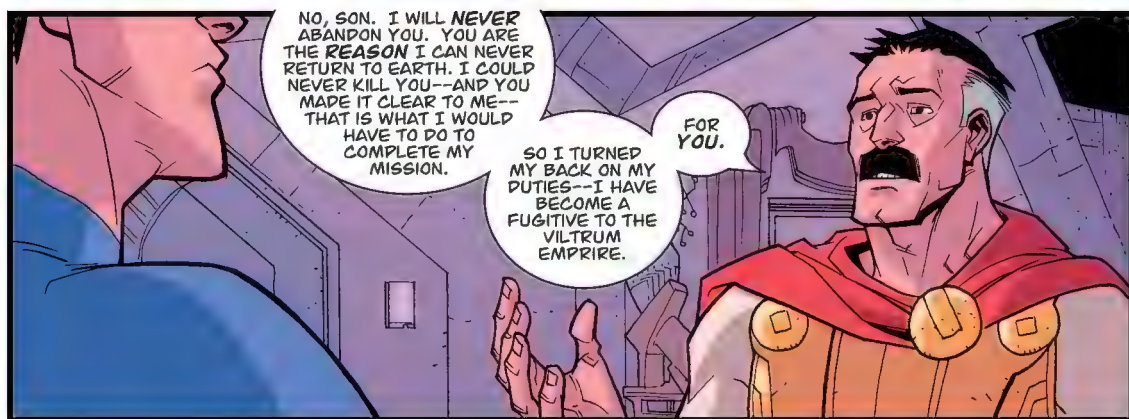
I SEE.







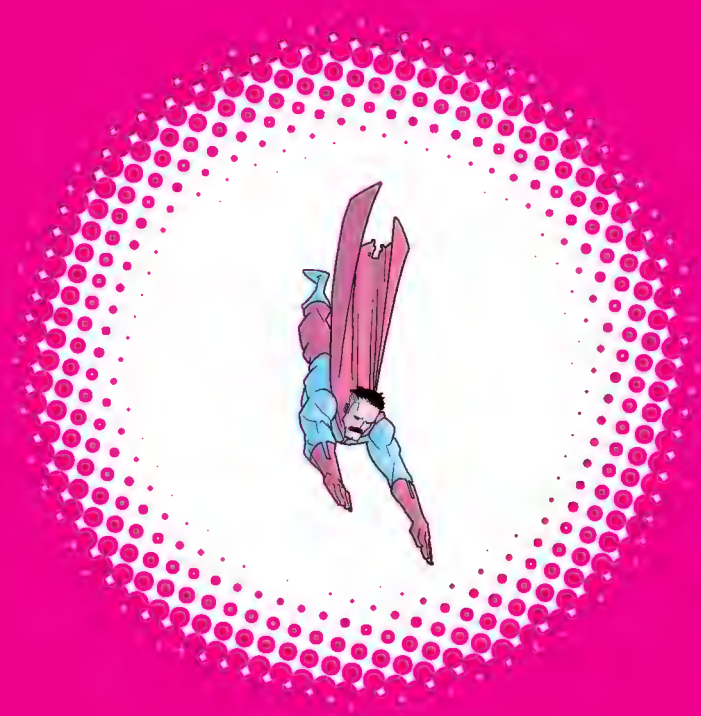






THAT...

...IS YOUR
LITTLE
BROTHER.



CHAPTER THREE



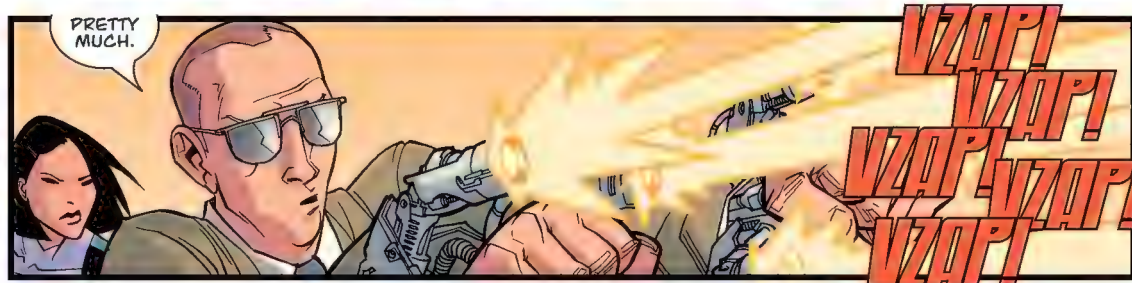
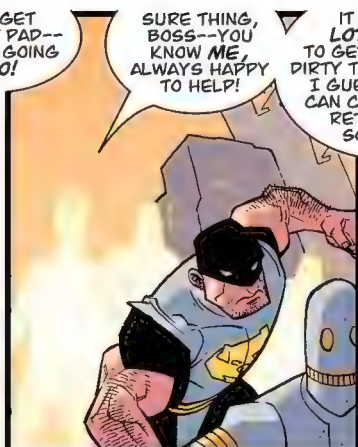
MEANWHILE,
BACK ON EARTH.

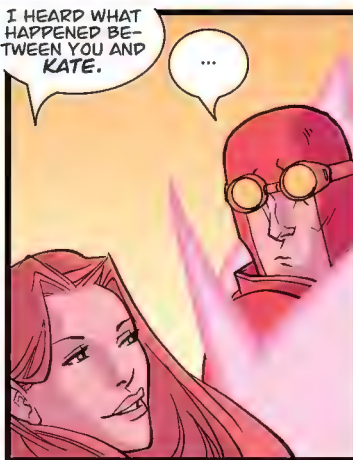
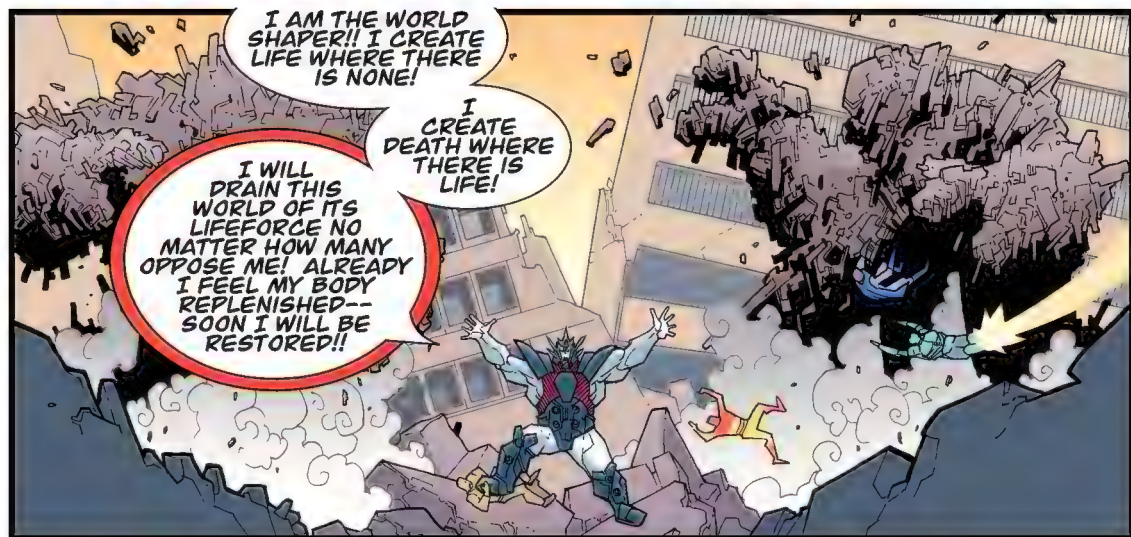
BEHOLD
THE MIGHT OF
OMNIPOTUS,
THE WORLD
SHAPER, AND
BEHOLD THE
END OF ALL
THINGS!

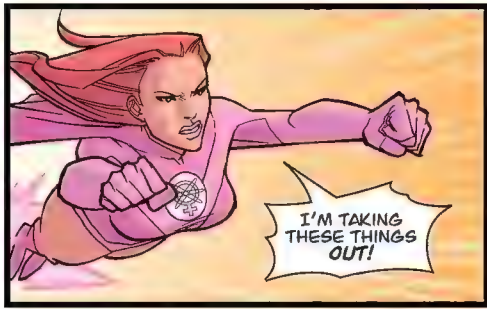
TREMBLE
BEFORE MY
UNLIMITED
POWER!



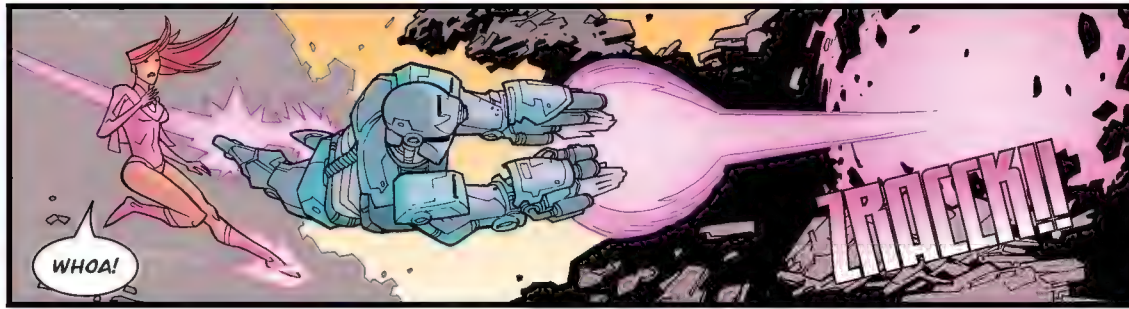








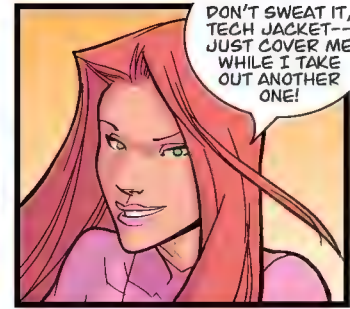
I'M TAKING THESE THINGS OUT!



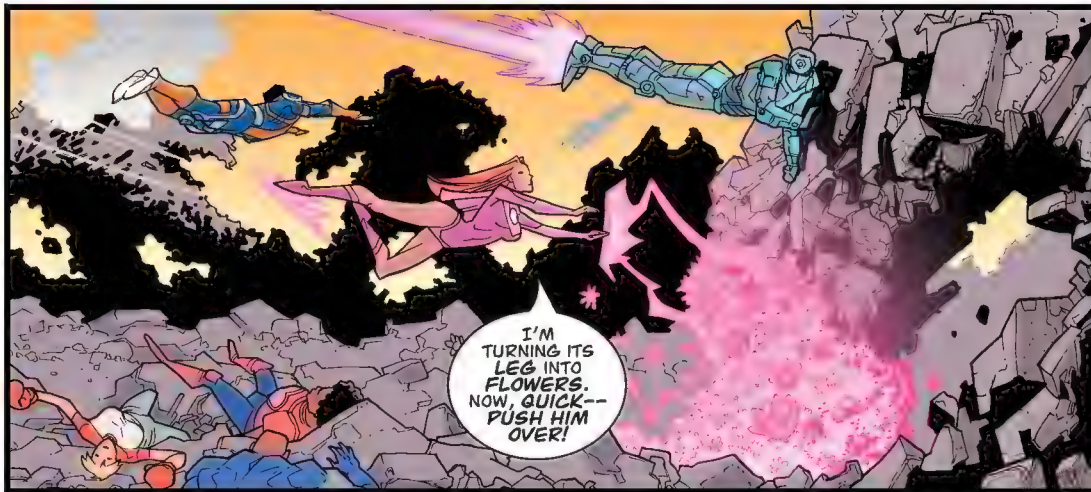
WHOA!



SORRY ABOUT CUTTING YOU OFF LIKE THAT--I'M STILL A LITTLE NEW TO ALL THIS. I PROMISE.



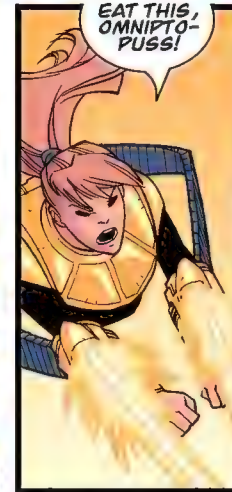
DON'T SWEAT IT, TECH JACKET--JUST COVER ME WHILE I TAKE OUT ANOTHER ONE!



I'M TURNING ITS LEG INTO FLOWERS. NOW, QUICK--PUSH HIM OVER!



DOOM!!!



EAT THIS, OMNIPTO-PUSS!

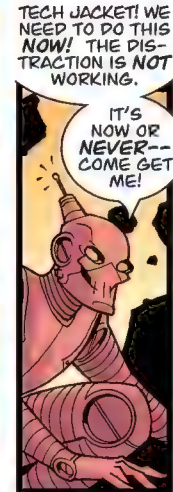


MORE TICKLE-RAYS FROM THE GNATS.

I ALWAYS MISS THIS PART THE MOST WHEN IT'S OVER.

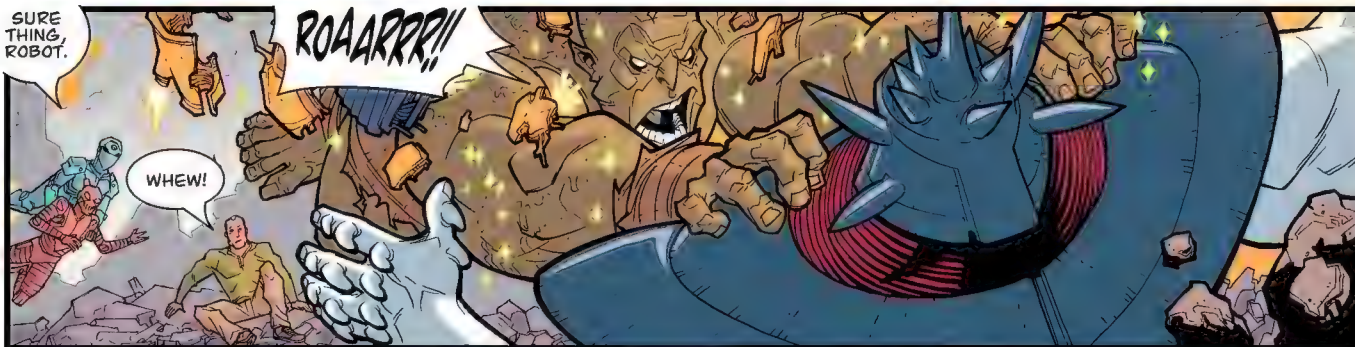


TICKLE RAYS?! SCREW THIS!!



TECH JACKET! WE NEED TO DO THIS NOW! THE DISTRACTION IS NOT WORKING.

IT'S NOW OR NEVER--COME GET ME!



ROAARRR!!

SURE THING, ROBOT.

WHEW!



YOU'VE GOT THE WARP-KEY?

IT'S RIGHT HERE. BUILT BASED ON THE DESIGN YOU HELPED STEAL FROM HIS WARP-VESSEL. IT JUST NEEDS A POWER SUPPLY.

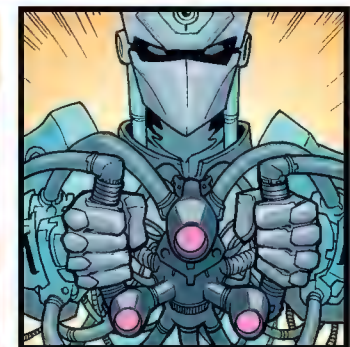
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN POWER IT?



I'M OUR ONLY HOPE--I'LL HAVE TO.

VERY TRUE.

HERE GOES NOTHING.



MY RESTORATION IS NEARLY COMPLETE--YOU'D BE WISE TO SURRENDER.



SORRY, PAL. THAT'S JUST NOT AN OPTION!

WZORRRP!

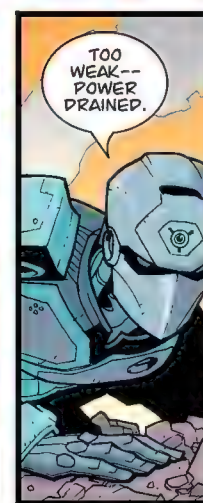


AH--I HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOU! YOU WERE ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE WARP KEY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.

YOU HAVE OPENED A PORTAL TO MY UNIVERSE--THE ONE I DRAINED AND DESTROYED!



IT MATTERS NOT!

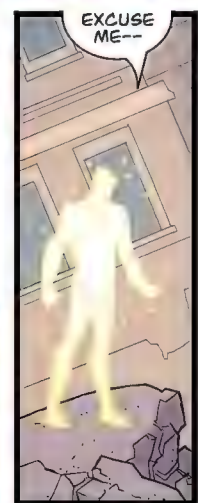


TOO WEAK--POWER DRAINED.

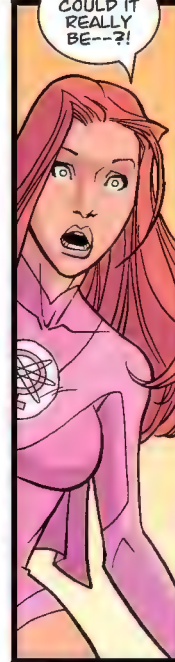


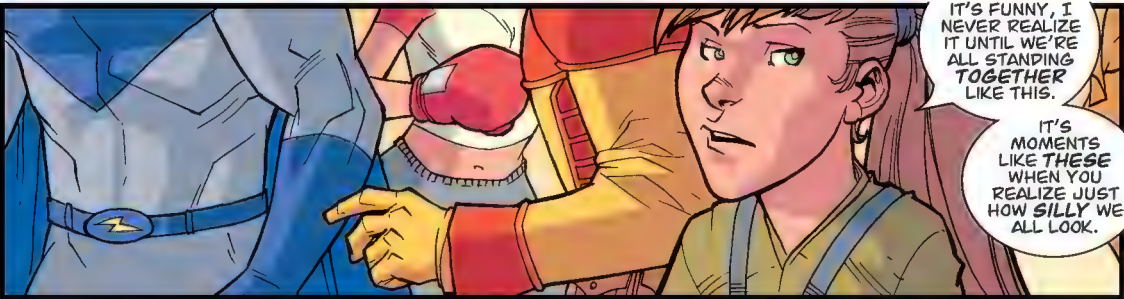
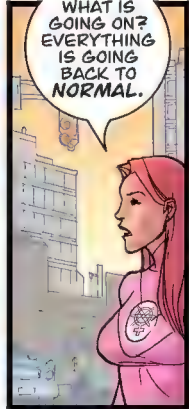
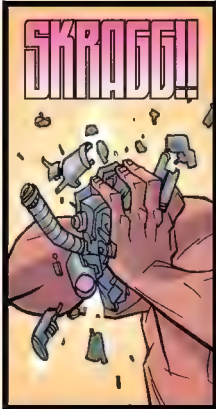
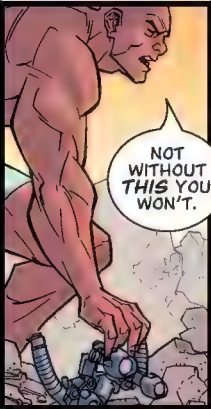
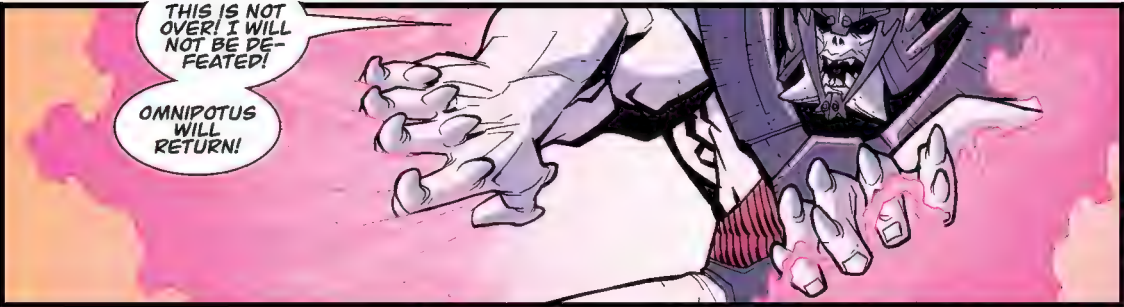
THE PORTAL WILL BE CLOSED IN MOMENTS--AND EVEN WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT COMBINED, YOU LACK THE POWER TO FORCE ME THROUGH.

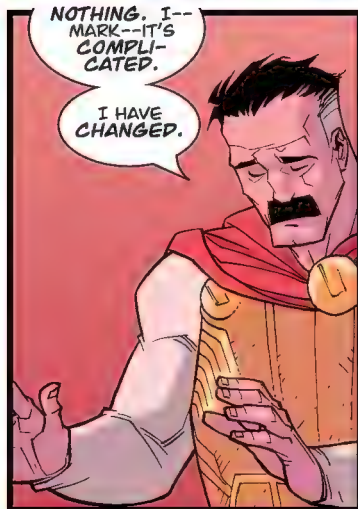
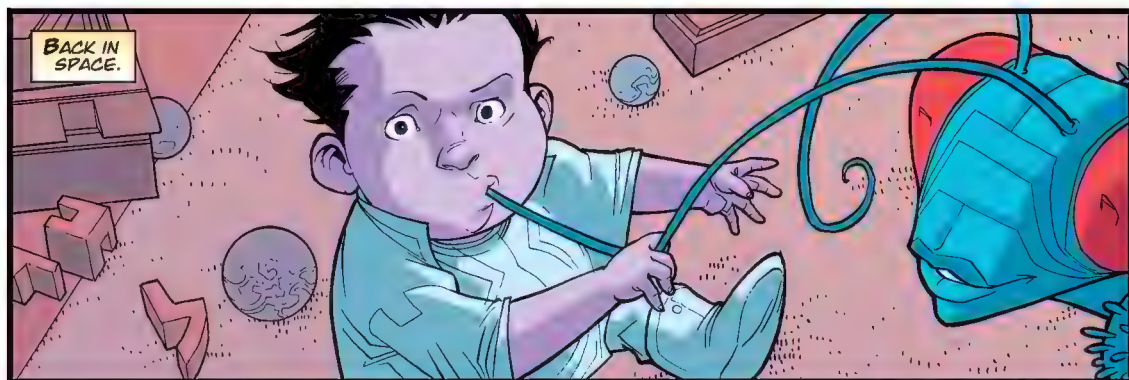
IT'S OVER!! I HAVE WON!!

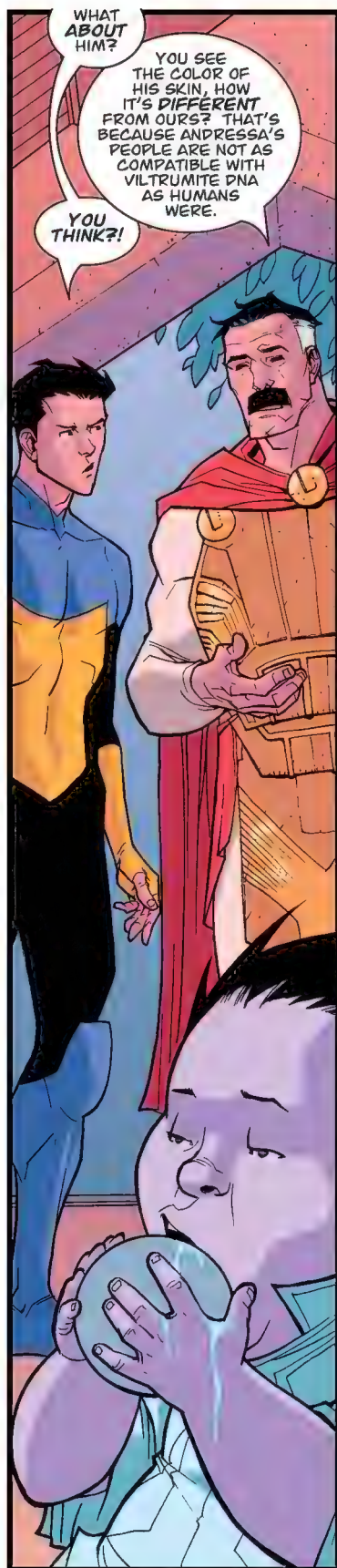


EXCUSE ME--









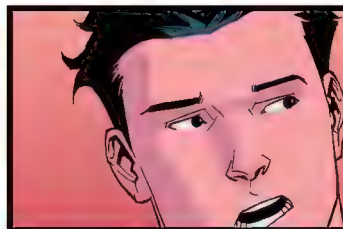
WHAT ABOUT HIM?

YOU SEE THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN, HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM OURS? THAT'S BECAUSE ADDRESSA'S PEOPLE ARE NOT AS COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITE DNA AS HUMANS WERE.

YOU THINK?!

I WOULD APPRECIATE YOU GETTING RID OF THE TONE, SON. I'M STILL YOUR FATHER.

UNDER-
STAND?



OKAY, GOT IT. PLEASE--GO ON. JUST MAKE THIS ALL MAKE SENSE TO ME, DAD. PLEASE.



YOUR BROTHER'S SKIN TONE ISN'T THE ONLY THING DIFFERENT. HE'S-- WELL, HE'S **THREE WEEKS** OLD, MARK. BY EARTH STANDARDS HE LOOKS TO BE A YEAR OLD.

HE IS AGING TOO FAST. NOW, I SUSPECT THE VILTRUMITE DNA WILL CAUSE HIS AGING TO SLOW JUST AS IT HAS YOURS WHEN HE REACHES PUBERTY--BUT HOW MUCH IT WILL SLOW DOWN IS STILL IN QUESTION.

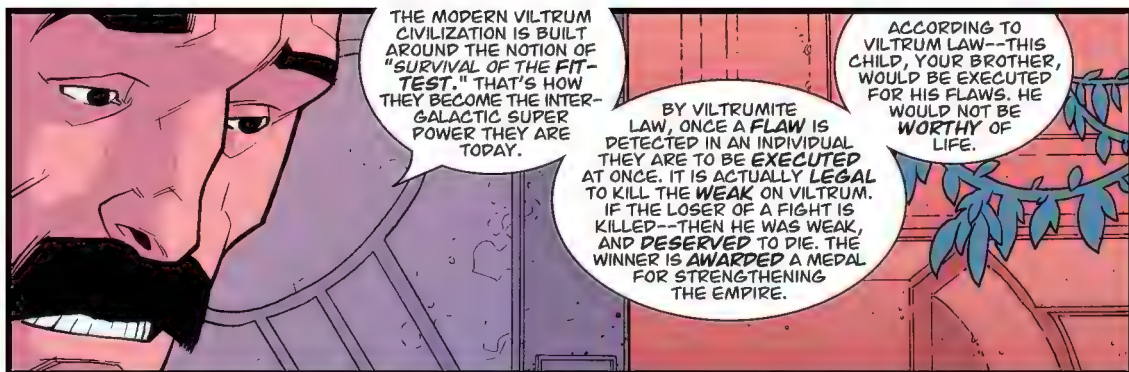


IS HE GOING TO--? I MEAN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE HAS?



HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS. HE'LL BE FINE. HE'LL STILL LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE, ESPECIALLY BY HUMAN STANDARDS AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE.

BUT ON VILTRUM... THAT WOULD BE A WHOLE OTHER STORY.



THE MODERN VILTRUM CIVILIZATION IS BUILT AROUND THE NOTION OF "SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST." THAT'S HOW THEY BECAME THE INTER-GALACTIC SUPER POWER THEY ARE TODAY.

BY VILTRUMITE LAW, ONCE A **FLAW** IS DETECTED IN AN INDIVIDUAL THEY ARE TO BE **EXECUTED** AT ONCE. IT IS ACTUALLY **LEGAL** TO KILL THE **WEAK** ON VILTRUM. IF THE LOSER OF A FIGHT IS KILLED--THEN HE WAS **WEAK**, AND **DESERVED** TO DIE. THE WINNER IS **AWARDED** A MEDAL FOR STRENGTHENING THE EMPIRE.

ACCORDING TO VILTRUM LAW--THIS CHILD, YOUR BROTHER, WOULD BE EXECUTED FOR HIS FLAWS. HE WOULD NOT BE **WORTHY** OF LIFE.

WHAT'S HIS NAME? YOU HAVEN'T CALLED HIM BY NAME YET, YOU KEEP SAYING "SON" OR "YOUR BROTHER."

THE CUSTOM HERE IS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO **CHOOSE** THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY REACH ADULTHOOD.

WHICH WOULD BE **TWO WEEKS** FROM NOW, WERE IT NOT FOR HIS VILTRUMITE BLOOD.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

I MEAN--NOLAN IS AN EARTH NAME, RIGHT? YOU HAD TO HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME ON VILTRUM.

NO, NOLAN IS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY NAME. THE VILTRUMITES HAVE NO NEED FOR LAST NAMES, SO GRAYSON WAS ADDED WHILE I WAS ON EARTH.

THE PRONUNCIATION WAS JUST A BIT DIFFERENT, AS I RECALL CLOSER TO "NOWL-AHN" BUT MORE OR LESS THE SAME.



SOMEHOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL **BETTER**. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT GOT TO ME THE **MOST** WAS THAT I MORE THAN LIKELY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME ANYMORE.



I HOPE THIS TALK WE'VE HAD IS SHOWING YOU THAT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN EVEN I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ADMITTED.

I'M SORRY, SON--FOR EVERYTHING.

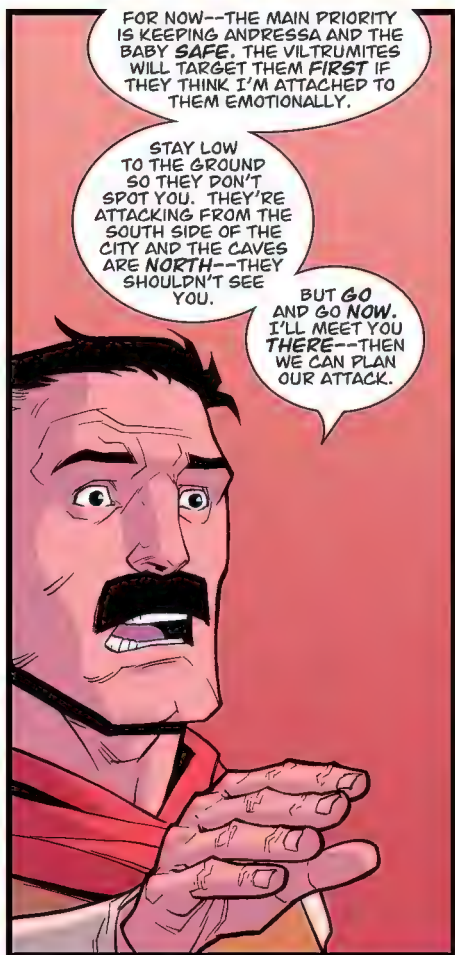
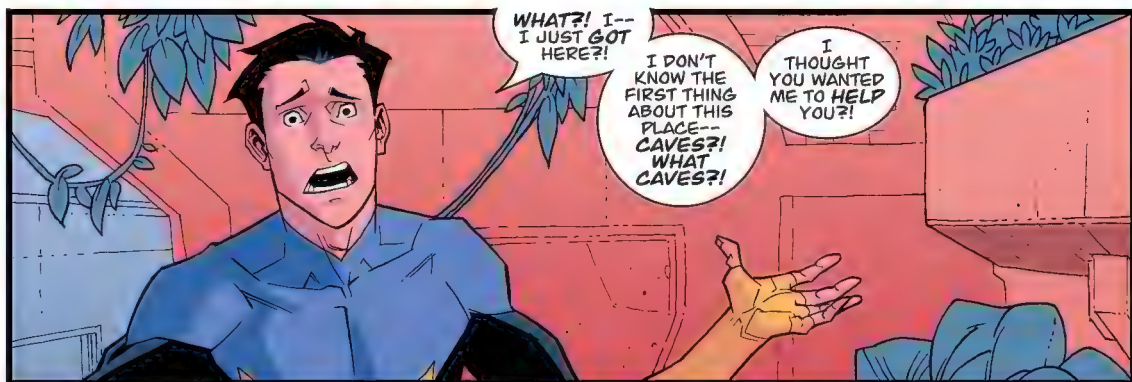


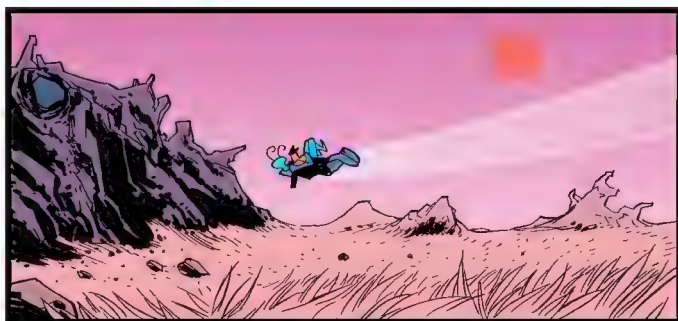
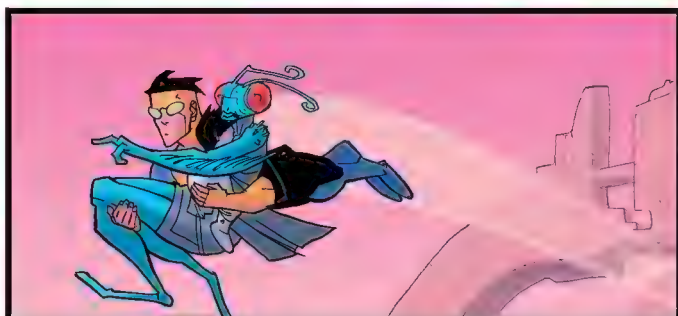
THAT, THOUGH, DOESN'T HELP AT ALL.

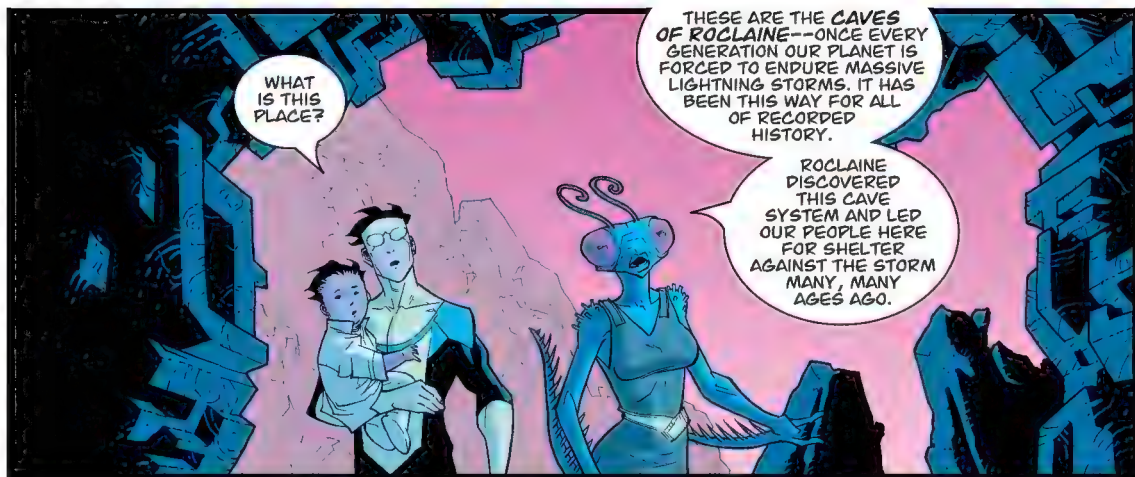
AN APOLOGY JUST ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT.











WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

THESE ARE THE **CAVES OF ROCLAINE**--ONCE EVERY GENERATION OUR PLANET IS FORCED TO ENDURE MASSIVE LIGHTNING STORMS. IT HAS BEEN THIS WAY FOR ALL OF RECORDED HISTORY.

ROCLAINE DISCOVERED THIS CAVE SYSTEM AND LED OUR PEOPLE HERE FOR SHELTER AGAINST THE STORM MANY, MANY AGES AGO.

IT WAS ALSO USED AS A **HAVEN** FOR OUR PEOPLE DURING THE WARS OF TIMES PAST BEFORE MY PEOPLE UNITED UNDER ONE WORLD RULER.

THAT'S INTERESTING.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?

THIS.

THE CAVES ARE NO LONGER USED FOR **PROTECTION**. OUR TECHNOLOGY HAS BUILT STRUCTURES THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE LIGHTNING STORMS.


NOW WE USE THE CAVES AS A PLACE FOR GATHERING, FOR STUDY, FOR MANY THINGS.

THE ENGRAVINGS WILL LIGHT THE WAY. THERE ARE **MANY** CAVERNS AHEAD, MANY LAVISHLY FURNISHED--WE WILL BE QUITE COMFORTABLE HERE.


FOLLOW ME.



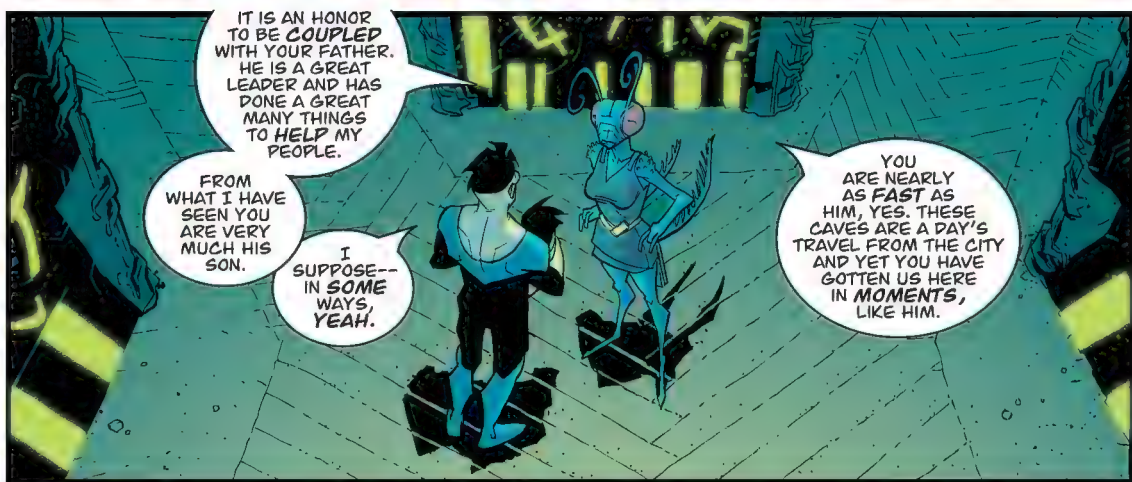
SO--YOU'VE
BEEN WITH MY
FATHER
FOR...?



MOST OF MY
LIFE. AS YOUR
FATHER DESCRIBED
YOUR TIME KEEPING
METHODS TO
US, THREE
MONTHS.



THREE
MONTHS?! MAN--
HE DIDN'T WASTE
ANY TIME...



IT IS AN HONOR
TO BE COUPLED
WITH YOUR FATHER.
HE IS A GREAT
LEADER AND HAS
DONE A GREAT
MANY THINGS
TO HELP MY
PEOPLE.


FROM
WHAT I HAVE
SEEN YOU
ARE VERY
MUCH HIS
SON.

I
SUPPOSE--
IN SOME
WAYS,
YEAH.

YOU
ARE NEARLY
AS FAST AS
HIM, YES. THESE
CAVES ARE A DAY'S
TRAVEL FROM THE CITY
AND YET YOU HAVE
GOTTEN US HERE
IN MOMENTS,
LIKE HIM.



SO IT
IS TRUE--
THE GREAT
NOLAN HAS
Sired AN OFF-
SPRING.



IF YOU ARE
POWERFUL ENOUGH
TO WITHSTAND MY
ASSAULT, YOU WILL
BE ALLOWED TO LIVE.
YOU WILL BE WORTHY
TO STAND BY MY
SIDE---A SOLDIER
OF THE VILTRUM
EMPIRE.

IF YOU
ARE NOT---
YOU WILL
DIE.



CHAPTER FOUR





PREPARE FOR
BATTLE, YOUNG
VILTRUMITE.

I'M HERE
TO GIVE YOUR
LIFE **GLORY**--
OR AN **ENDING**.
I AM ANXIOUS
TO SEE WHICH
IT WILL BE.



I'M
NOT.

ANDRESSA,
HEAD FOR THE
MOUTH OF THE
CAVE. QUICKLY,
PLEASE.



YOU'RE--
PROTECTING
THESE TWO.
WHY? NOLAN
COULDN'T HAVE...
THAT'S JUST--
THERE'S NO
WAY.

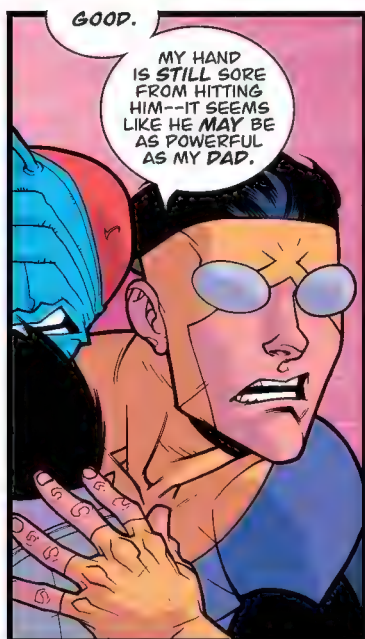


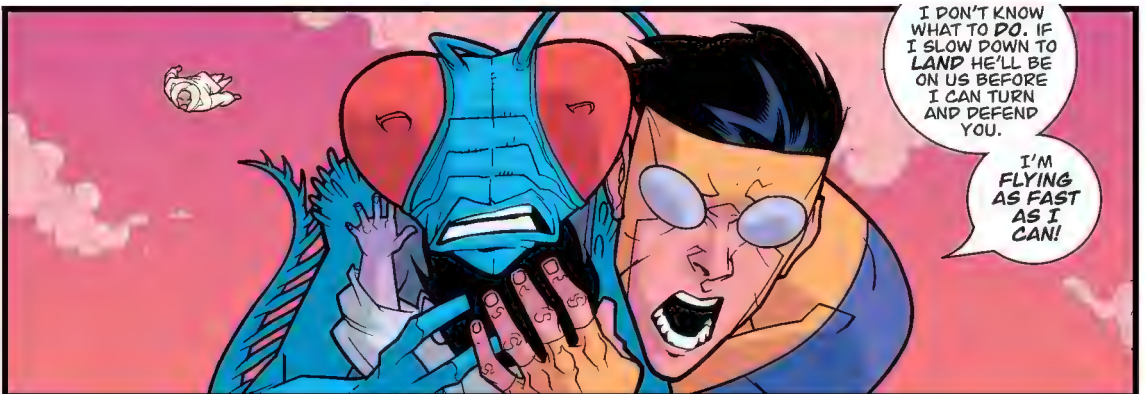
HE DID. HE ABANDONED
YOUR WORLD AND CAME
HERE--AND CREATED
ANOTHER OFFSPRING
WITH THESE--
CREATURES.

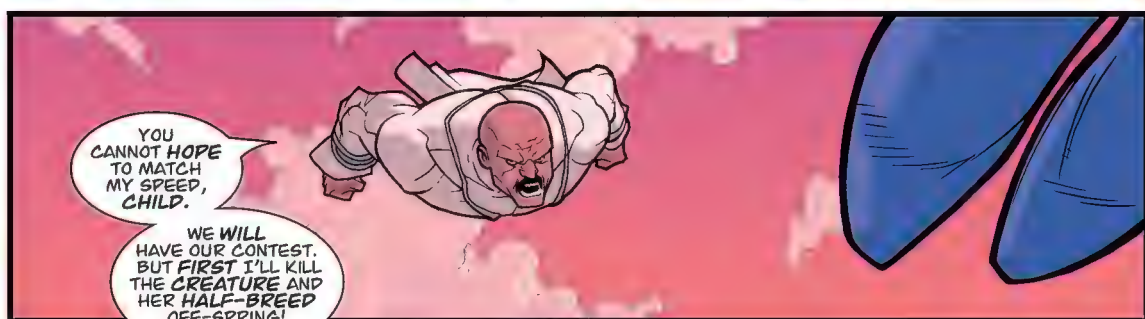


I'M JUST...
STUNNED. THIS
IS JUST...
UNBELIEVABLE.

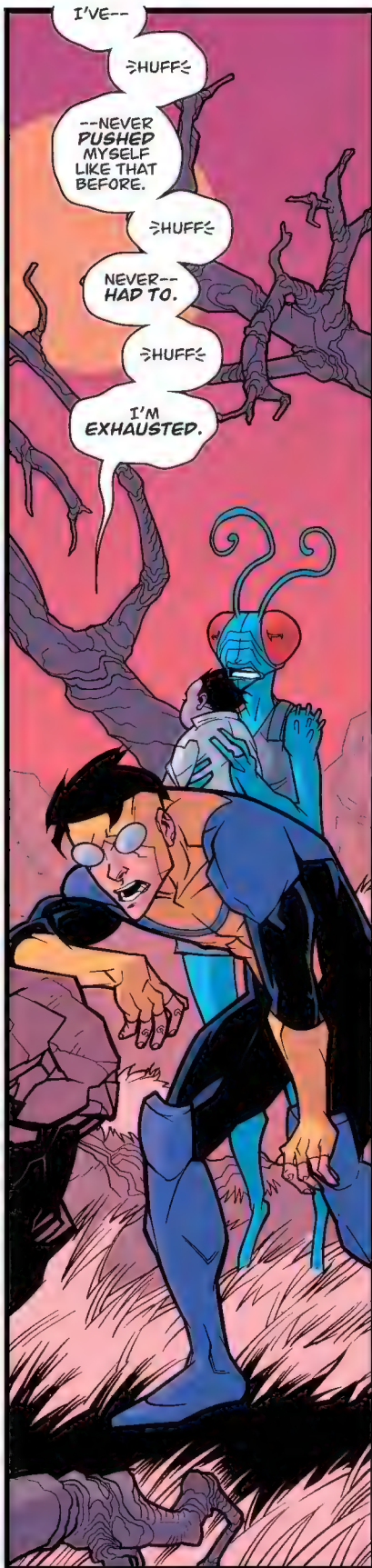
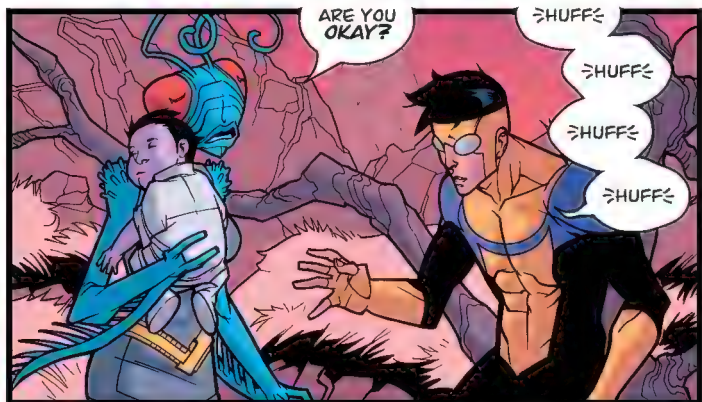
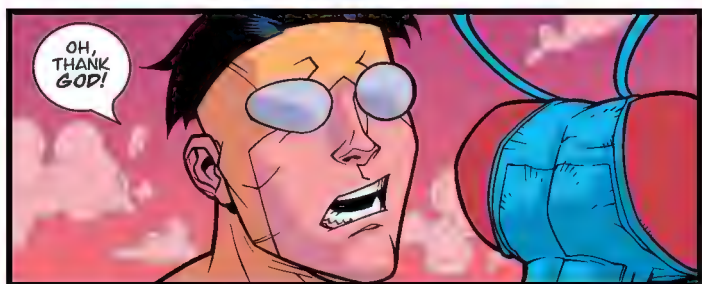


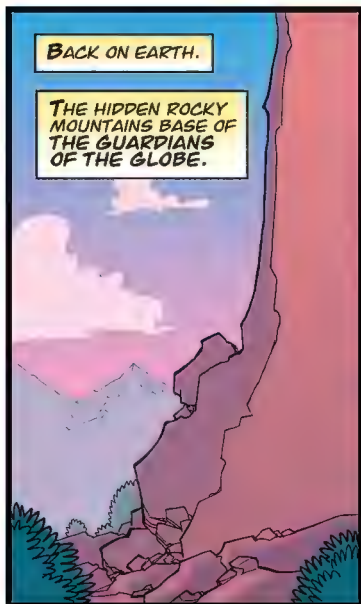












BACK ON EARTH.

THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



SAMSON,
I WAS
WANTING
TO--

--TALK
TO YOU.



I KNOW.
DATED. VERY
DATED.

I'M PLANNING ON
GETTING A NEW
ONE. I PROMISE.
I JUST WANTED
TO TRY IT ON
JUST IN
CASE.

IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

MY POWER SUIT
WAS DESTROYED BY
MONSTER GIRL IN THE FIGHT
WITH OMNIPOTUS, AND I'VE
GOT MY POWERS BACK NOW,
SO I DON'T REALLY NEED IT.
SO I FIGURED I'D SEE
IF THIS COSTUME
WOULD STILL
WORK.

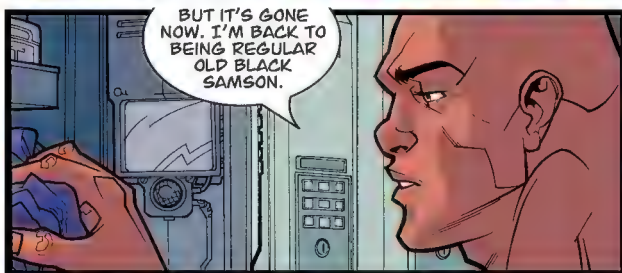
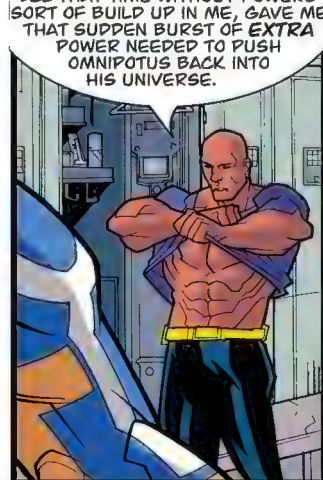
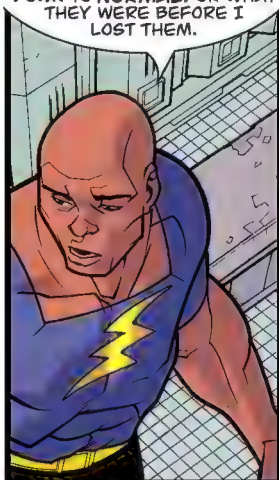
IT
DOESN'T.



HOW
ARE YOU
FEELING?

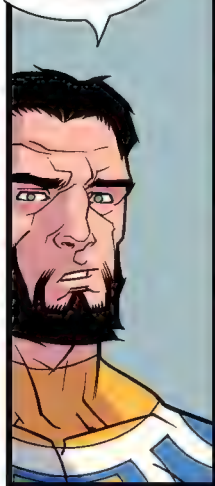
GOOD. I'VE GOT MY POWERS
BACK. I'VE BEEN WORSE. MY
POWER LEVELS ARE BACK
DOWN TO NORMAL. OR WHAT
THEY WERE BEFORE I
LOST THEM.

BEING IN THE COMA, IT GAVE
MY BODY A CHANCE TO HEAL--
RESET ITSELF OR SOMETHING.
ALL THAT TIME WITHOUT POWERS
SORT OF BUILD UP IN ME, GAVE ME
THAT SUDDEN BURST OF EXTRA
POWER NEEDED TO PUSH
OMNIPOTUS BACK INTO
HIS UNIVERSE.



BUT IT'S GONE
NOW. I'M BACK TO
BEING REGULAR
OLD BLACK
SAMSON.

I JUST WANTED TO SAY... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.



YEAH. SURE, MAN. LIKE YOU CARE.

EXCUSE ME?



I WAS IN A COMA FOR A FEW MONTHS. YOU NEVER VISITED ME. I ASKED AROUND. I KNOW YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANY OF US ON THIS TEAM. NEVER DID.



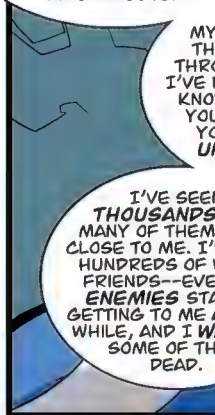
I'LL ADMIT IT. YOU'RE RIGHT. I DIDN'T.

BEFORE.

BUT THINGS ARE CHANGING. I'M CHANGING.



DO YOU KNOW WHY I NEVER VISITED YOU? WHY I NEVER REALLY GOT TO KNOW ANY OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS? WHY I WAS SO DISTANT--DISCONNECTED?



YOU KNOW MY HISTORY, THE THINGS I'VE BEEN THROUGH, HOW LONG I'VE BEEN AROUND. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING. YOU ALL DID. STILL, YOU NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD.

I'VE SEEN THOUSANDS DIE. MANY OF THEM VERY CLOSE TO ME. I'VE LOST HUNDREDS OF WIVES, FRIENDS--EVEN THE ENEMIES STARTED GETTING TO ME AFTER A WHILE, AND I WANTED SOME OF THEM DEAD.

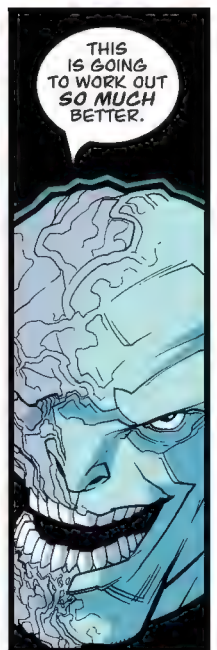
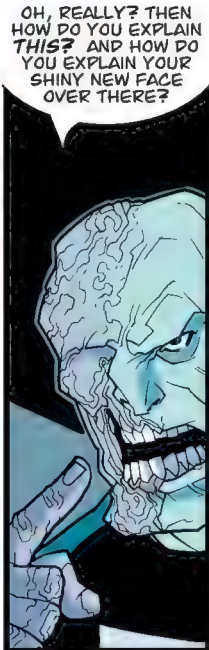
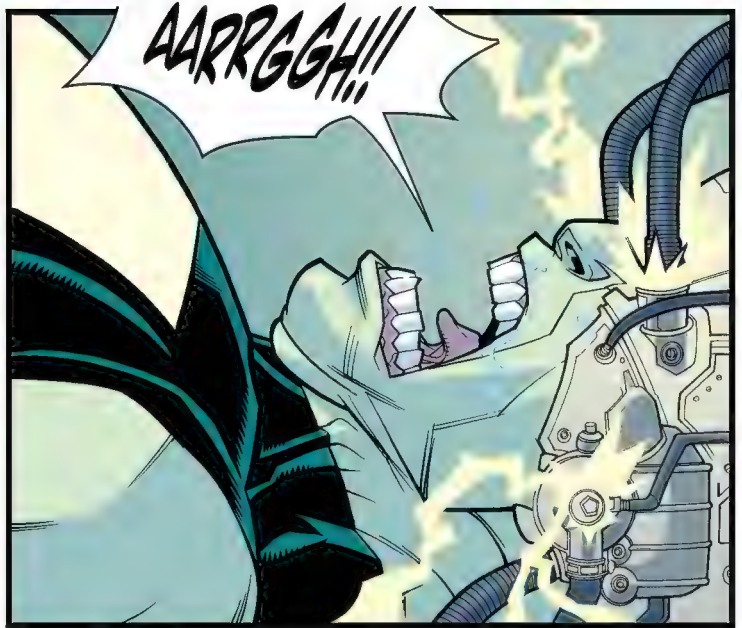


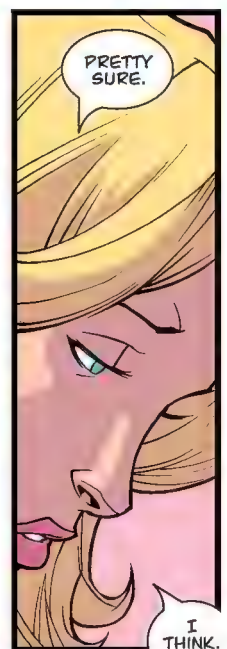
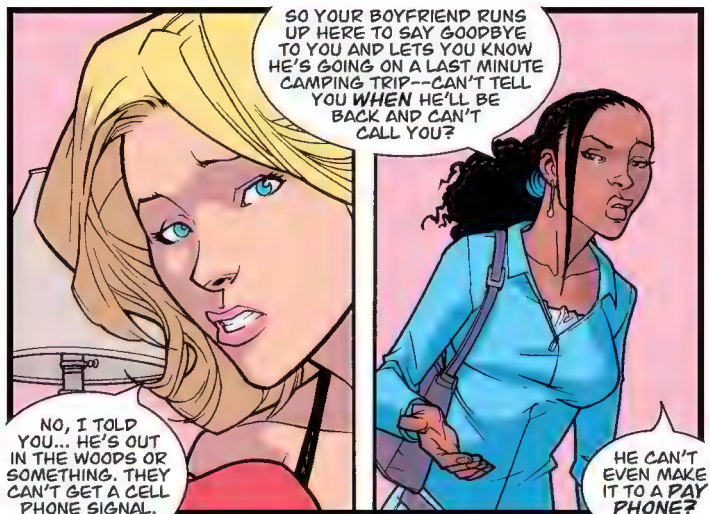
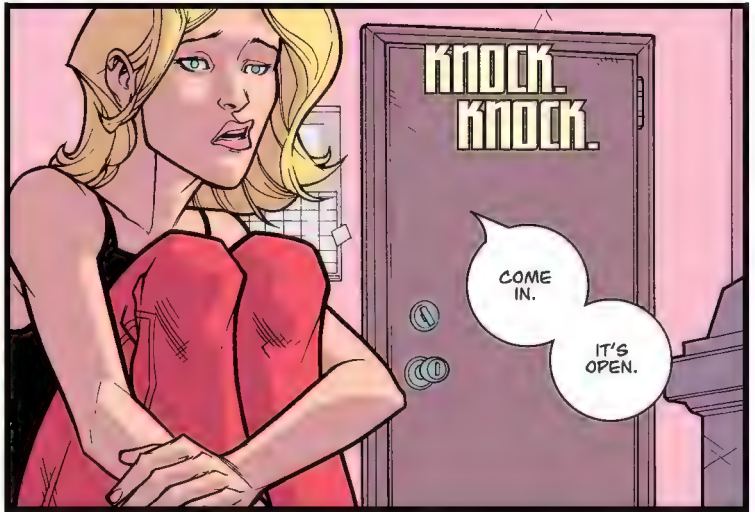
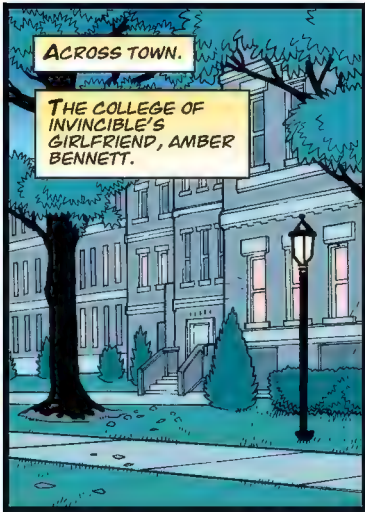
YOU HAVE TO REALIZE. I REMEMBER EVERY ONE OF THEM--EVERY LAST ONE. I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THEIR VOICES, THE SMELL OF THEIR HAIR, THEIR FAVORITE THINGS, EVERYTHING.

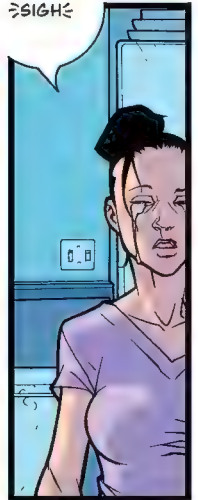
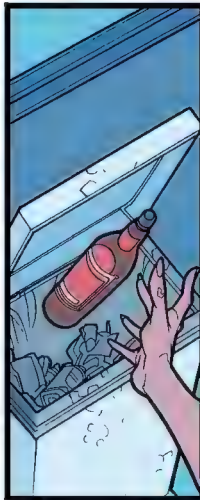
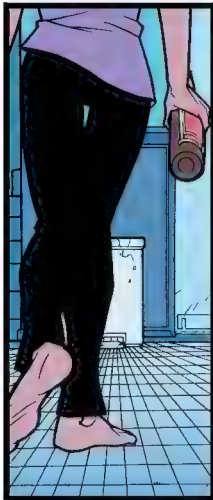
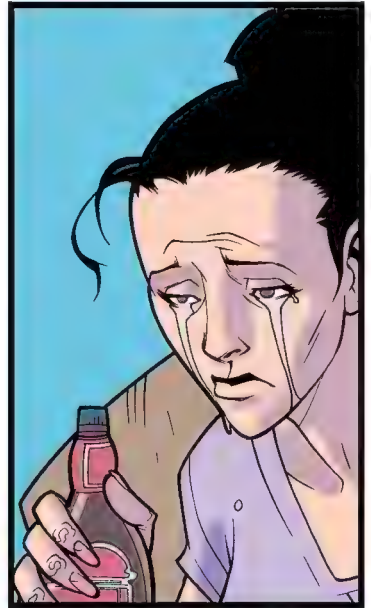
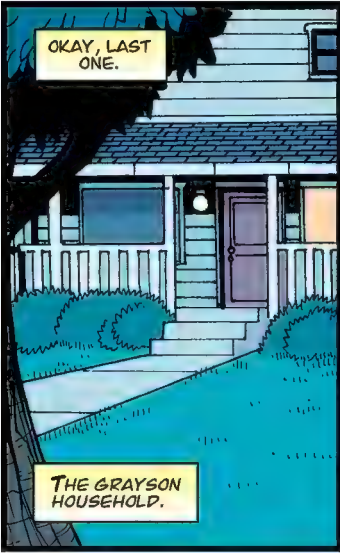
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN. THE YEARS CONTINUE ON--AND SO DO I, UNCHANGED... BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME--THEY TOUCH MY LIFE, I EXPERIENCE THEM, THEY BECOME A PART OF MY LIFE.

THEN THEY DIE.

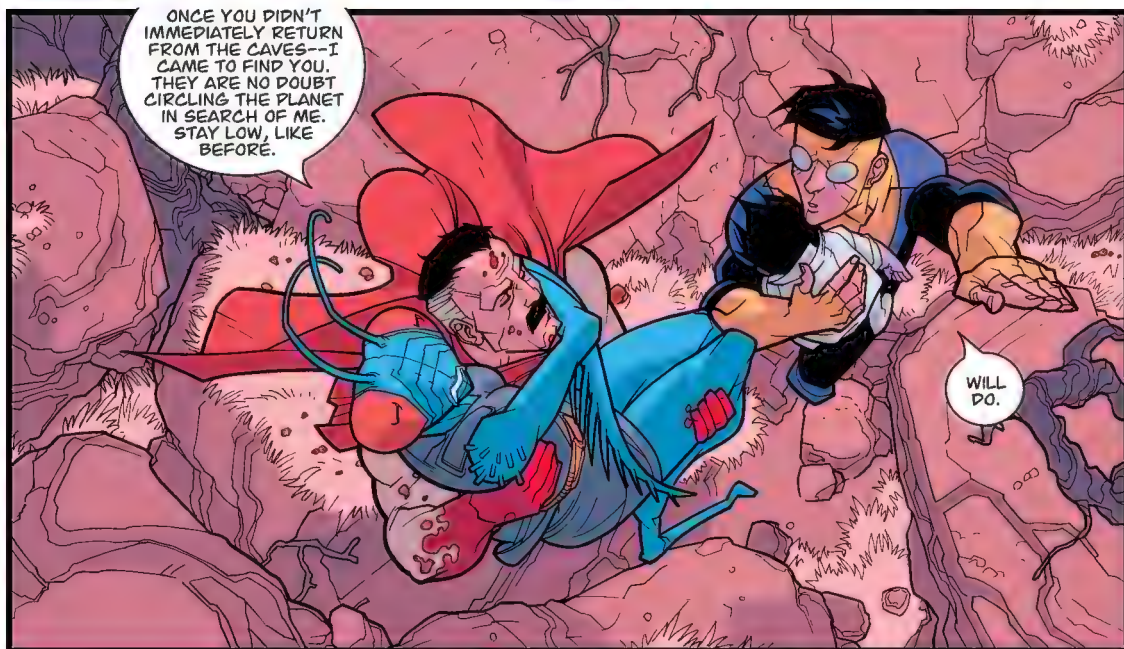
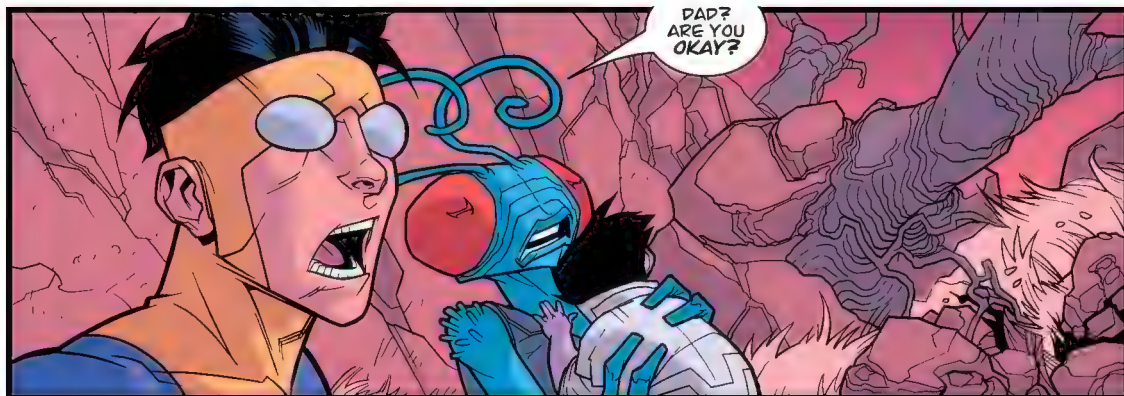












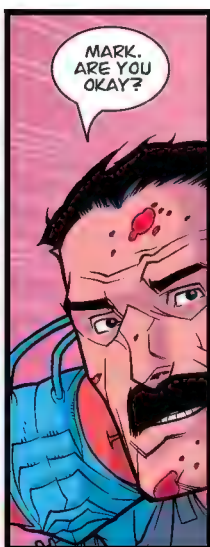
BE READY TO CATCH ANDRESSA, MARK. IF THEY FIND US, I WILL THROW HER TO YOU AND YOU WILL TAKE BOTH OF THEM TO THE CAVES.



OKAY. SURE.



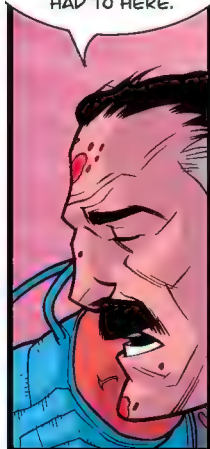
MARK. ARE YOU OKAY?



I GOT TIRED, DAD. I NEVER GOT TIRED BEFORE. I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD GET TIRED ANY MORE.



YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PUSHING YOURSELF. YOU'RE NOT USED TO USING YOUR POWERS AS MUCH AS YOU'VE HAD TO HERE.



YOU MEAN EXERCISE?

YES. PRETTY MUCH. YOU'VE GOT TO PUSH YOURSELF FROM TIME TO TIME---JUST IN CASE THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN.



I HADN'T EVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

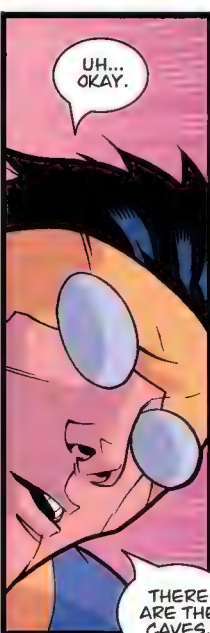
WEIRD.



YOU TAKE TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED, SON. YOU'VE GOT TO RESPECT YOUR POWERS MORE.



UH... OKAY.

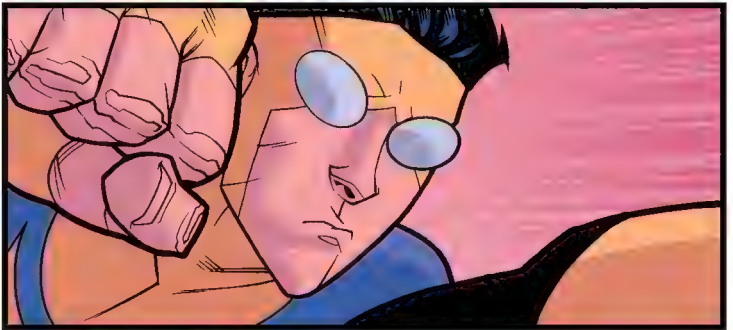


THERE ARE THE CAVES.

I'M HEADING BACK TO THE CITY. MEET ME THERE.

MAKE SURE THEY'RE SAFE.







DAD?
OH,
MAN... I--
WHAT ARE
WE GOING
TO DO
NOW?

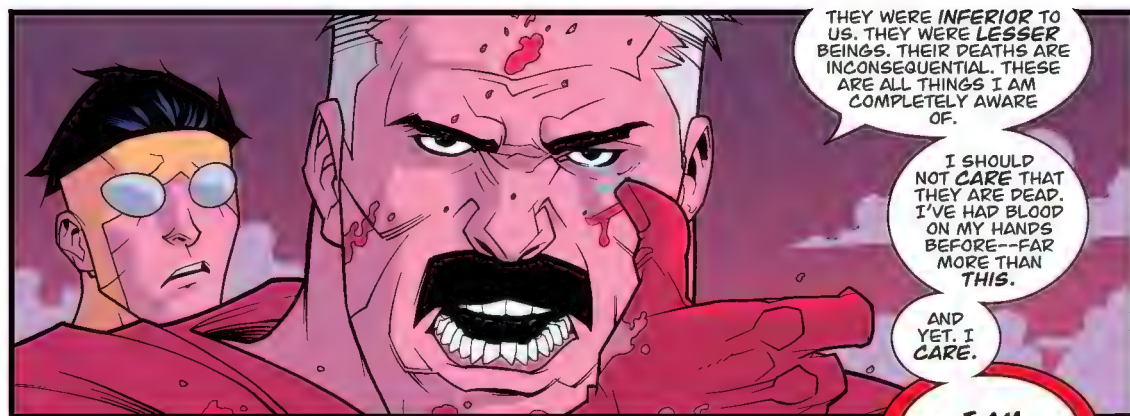


DAD?



CHAPTER FIVE





THEY WERE INFERIOR TO US. THEY WERE LESSER BEINGS. THEIR DEATHS ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL. THESE ARE ALL THINGS I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF.

I SHOULD NOT CARE THAT THEY ARE DEAD. I'VE HAD BLOOD ON MY HANDS BEFORE--FAR MORE THAN THIS.

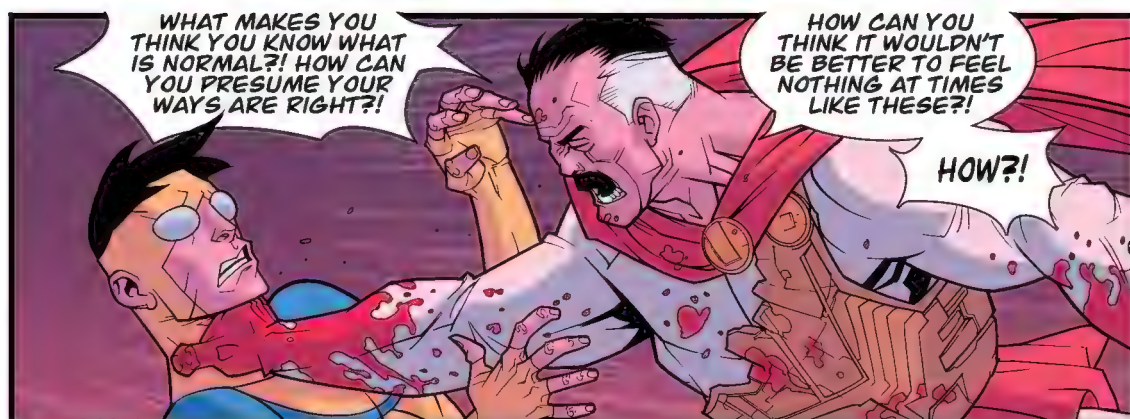
AND YET, I CARE.

I AM ENRAGED.



THAT'S OKAY, DAD. THAT'S NORMAL.

YOU'RE NOT THE SAME PERSON YOU ONCE WERE.



WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL?! HOW CAN YOU PRESUME YOUR WAYS ARE RIGHT?!

HOW CAN YOU THINK IT WOULDN'T BE BETTER TO FEEL NOTHING AT TIMES LIKE THESE?!

HOW?!



DAD--

--PLEASE.



THERE'S
THE NOLAN
WE'VE HEARD
STORIES
OF.

I MUST
ADMIT. YOU HAD
ME **WORRIED**
FOR A LITTLE
WHILE
THERE.





WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THIS?! THESE PEOPLE DID NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS!!

I WAS RULING THEM-- THEY WERE READY TO BECOME A PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE!

WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!

WRAMMM!
WRAMMM!
WRAMMM!

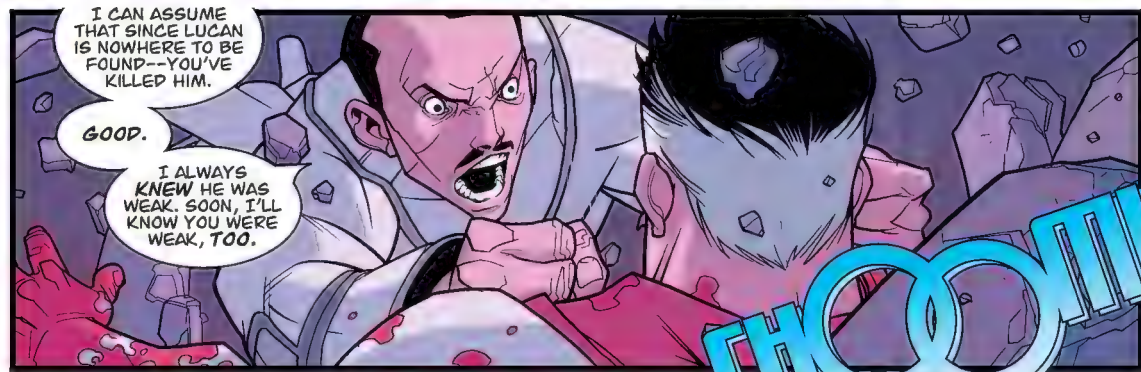


TO PISS YOU OFF!



THE MORE PISSED YOU ARE-- THE LESS YOU THINK. THE LESS YOU THINK-- THE EASIER YOU'LL BE TO DEFEAT!

NOT THAT OUR VICTORY HERE WAS EVER IN QUESTION.

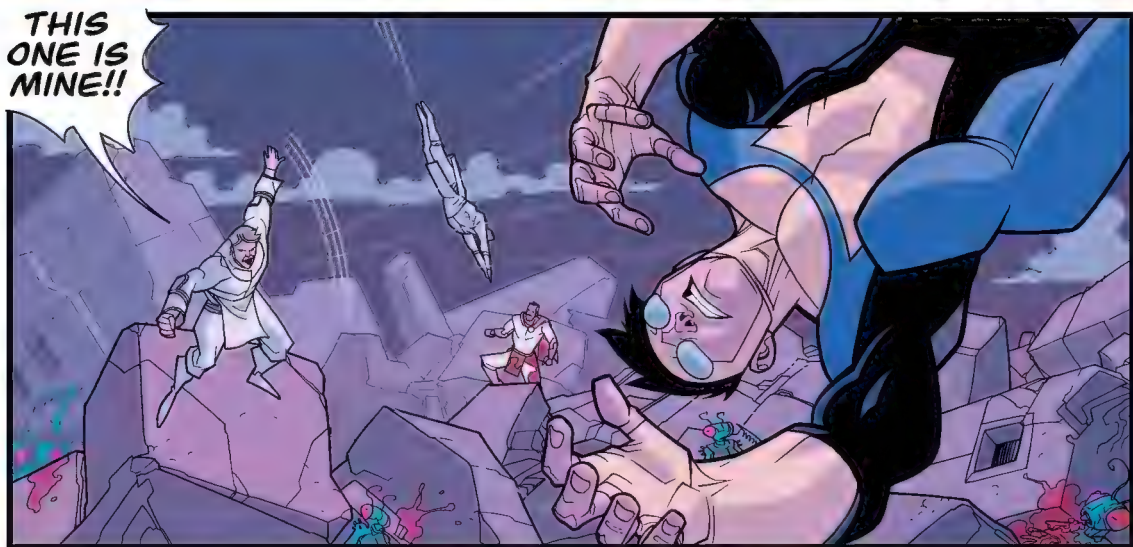


I CAN ASSUME THAT SINCE LUCAN IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND--YOU'VE KILLED HIM.

GOOD.

I ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS WEAK. SOON, I'LL KNOW YOU WERE WEAK, TOO.

CHOOOM!!!

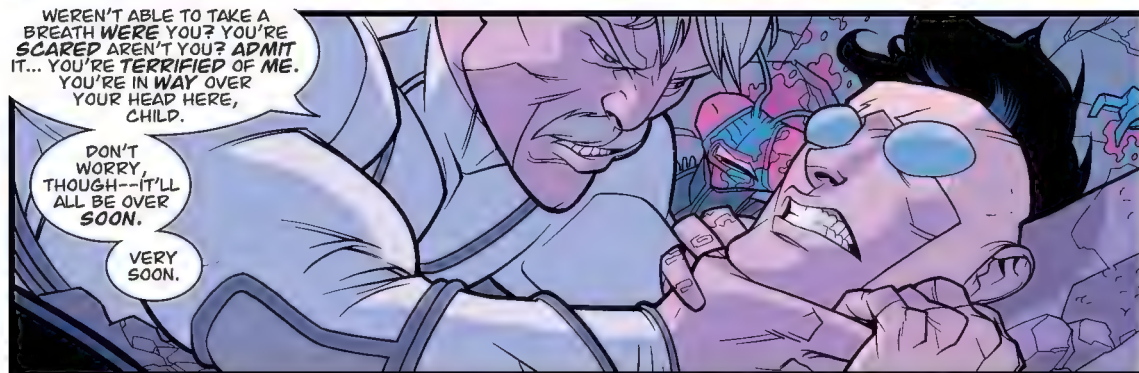




YOU KNOW--
SOME OF US VILTRIMITES
ACTUALLY **PREFER**
TO DISMEMBER OUR VICTIMS.
THEY THINK IT LEAVES A
BETTER **MESSAGE**. WHEN
IT GETS DOWN TO IT, I
THINK THEY JUST LIKE
MAKING A **MESS**.

ME? I PREFER
TO **AVOID** A MESS. I LIKE
TO SEE THE LOOK IN A VICTIM'S
EYES THE **SECOND** THEY DIE--
I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE MOMENT
THEIR BODY GOES LIMP AND THEIR
LIFE **ENDS**. YOU CAN'T DO THAT IF
THEIR EYES ARE ALREADY
LYING ON THE GROUND AT
THEIR FEET.

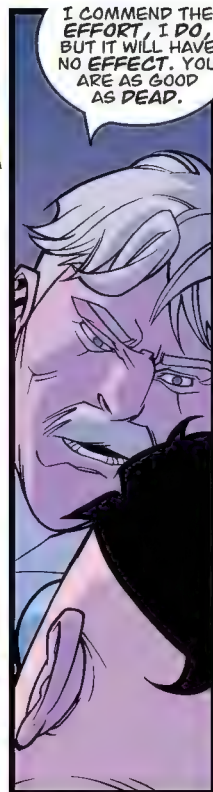
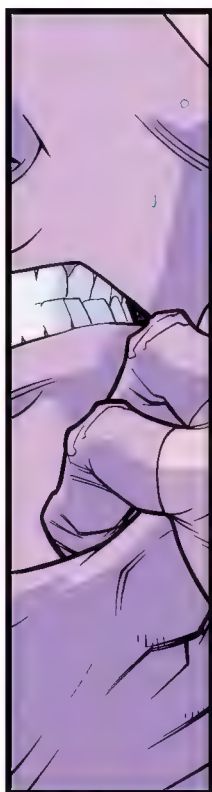
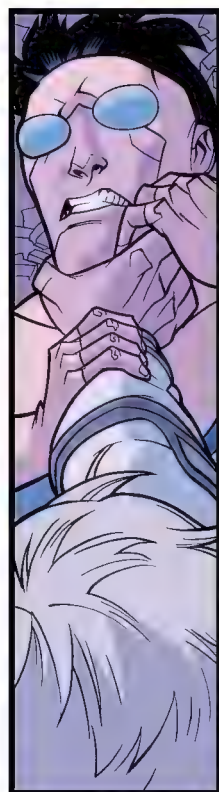
I PREFER
THINGS TO BE
MORE
PERSONAL.



WEREN'T ABLE TO TAKE A
BREATH WERE YOU? YOU'RE
SCARED AREN'T YOU? ADMIT
IT... YOU'RE **TERRIFIED** OF ME.
YOU'RE IN WAY OVER
YOUR HEAD HERE,
CHILD.

DON'T
WORRY,
THOUGH--IT'LL
ALL BE OVER
SOON.

VERY
SOON.

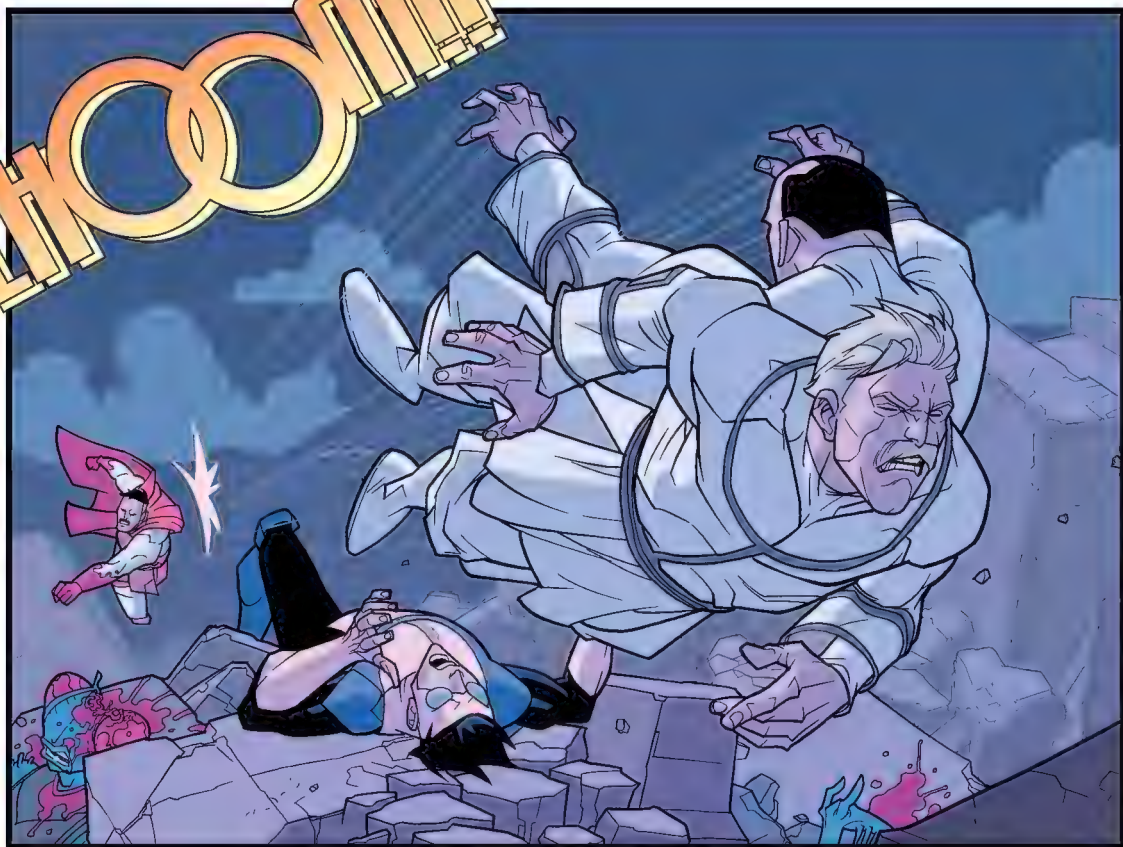


I COMMEND THE
EFFORT, I DO,
BUT IT WILL HAVE
NO **EFFECT**. YOU
ARE AS GOOD
AS DEAD.



...

THOOOM!!!

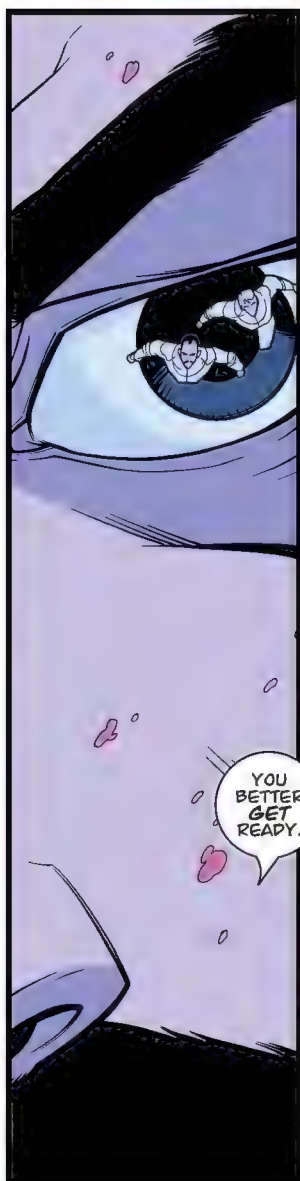


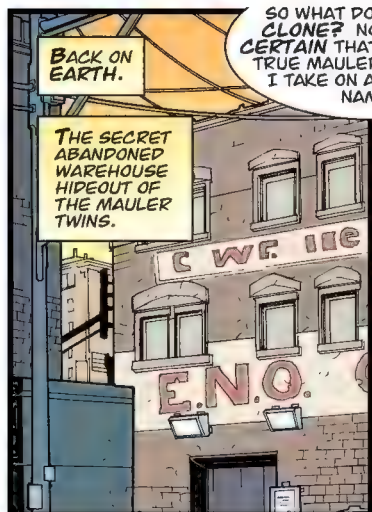
DID YOU KNOW
THE EMPIRE WAS
SENDING YOU TO
YOUR DEATHS
WHEN THEY SENT
YOU HERE?

OR ARE
YOU JUST
STARTING TO
REALIZE THAT
NOW?



KRAK!



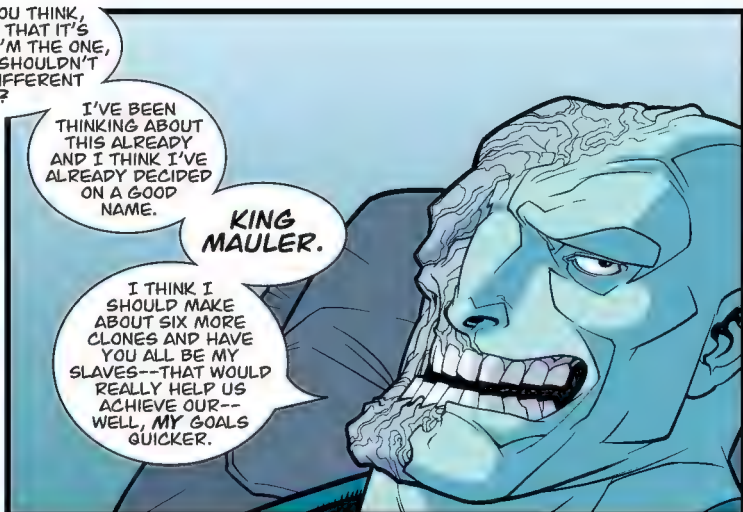


SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CLONE? NOW THAT IT'S CERTAIN THAT I'M THE ONE, TRUE MAULER, SHOULDN'T I TAKE ON A DIFFERENT NAME?

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS ALREADY AND I THINK I'VE ALREADY DECIDED ON A GOOD NAME.

KING MAULER.

I THINK I SHOULD MAKE ABOUT SIX MORE CLONES AND HAVE YOU ALL BE MY SLAVES--THAT WOULD REALLY HELP US ACHIEVE OUR--WELL, MY GOALS QUICKER.



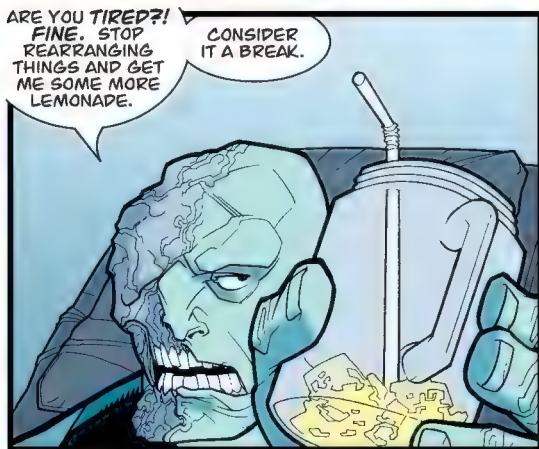
IT'S FUNNY HOW WE NEVER THOUGHT TO HAVE MORE THAN TWO OF US BEFORE, ISN'T IT?

YES--

--FUNNY.

ARE YOU TIRED?! FINE. STOP REARRANGING THINGS AND GET ME SOME MORE LEMONADE.

CONSIDER IT A BREAK.



YES, SIR.

THANK YOU, SIR.



OKAY, I CAN IMAGINE YOU'RE NOT TOO PLEASED WITH THIS SITUATION BUT THIS FALSE SERVITUDE IS STARTING TO GET ANNOYING.

I ORDER YOU TO STOP.

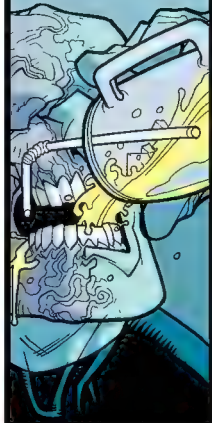


AT ONCE, SIR.



VERY FUNNY.

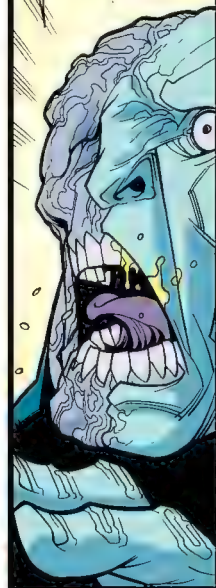
≡GULP≡



WAS THAT A NEW BATCH? THAT TASTED TERRIBLE! WHAT DID YOU--?



GAKK!!



I'LL ADMIT, POISONING YOU IS A BIT CLICHÉ, BUT WE ARE SO EVENLY MATCHED, KILLING YOU BY HAND WOULD HAVE BEEN NO SIMPLE TASK.

GAK!

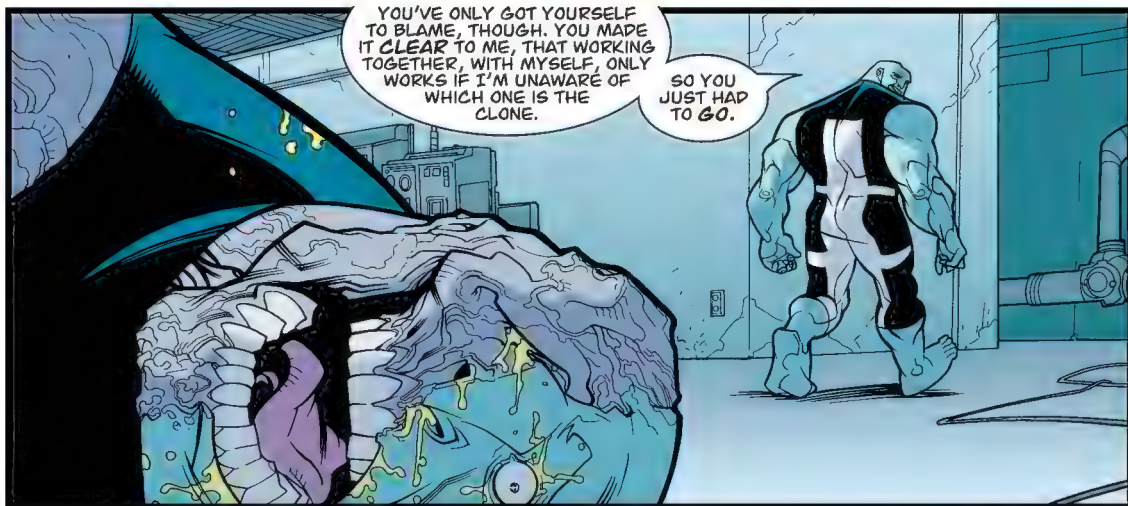
DON'T FIGHT IT. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO. JUST TAKE COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT YOU WILL LIVE ON--IN ME, AND MY FUTURE CLONES.

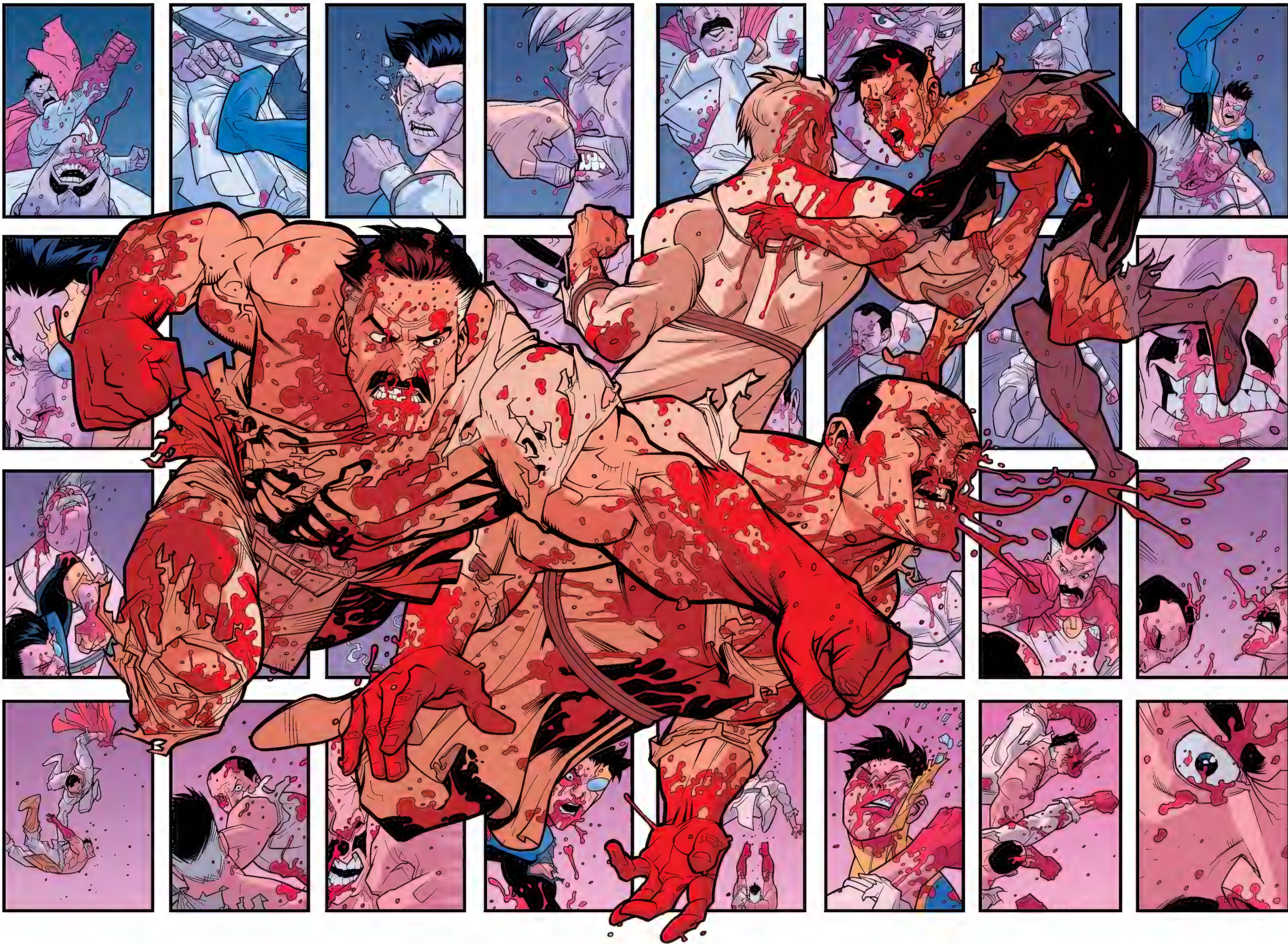
AND REALLY, I AM SORRY FOR DOING THIS. I REGRET IT MORE THAN YOU KNOW--IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE KILLING MYSELF.

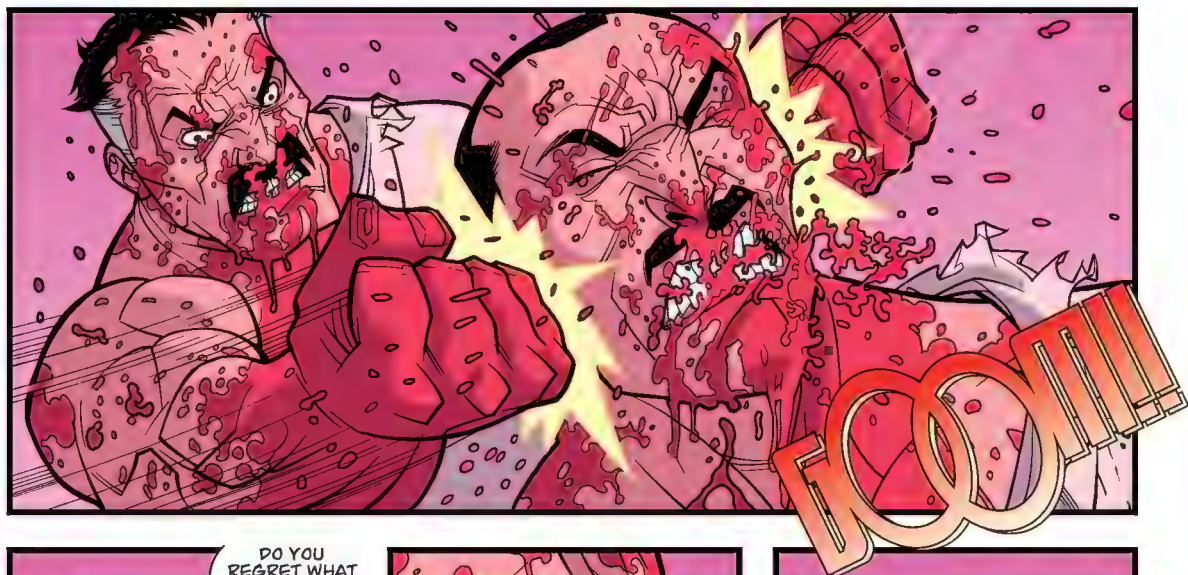


YOU'VE ONLY GOT YOURSELF TO BLAME, THOUGH. YOU MADE IT CLEAR TO ME, THAT WORKING TOGETHER, WITH MYSELF, ONLY WORKS IF I'M UNAWARE OF WHICH ONE IS THE CLONE.

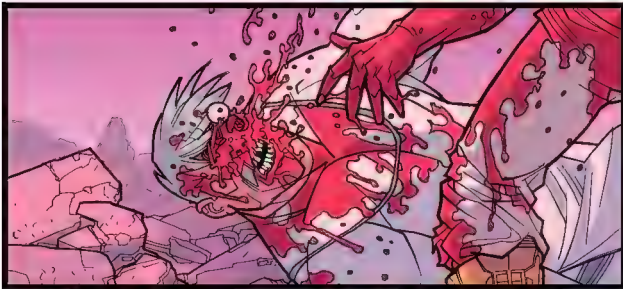
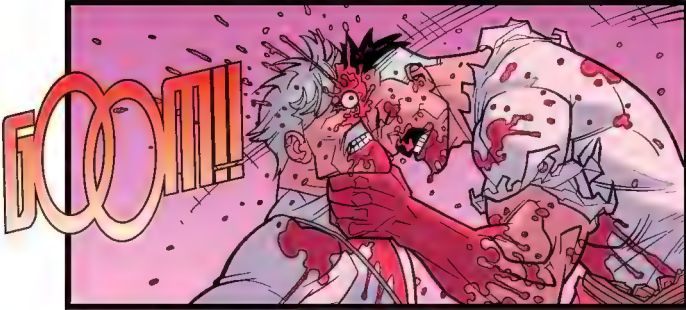
SO YOU JUST HAD TO GO.





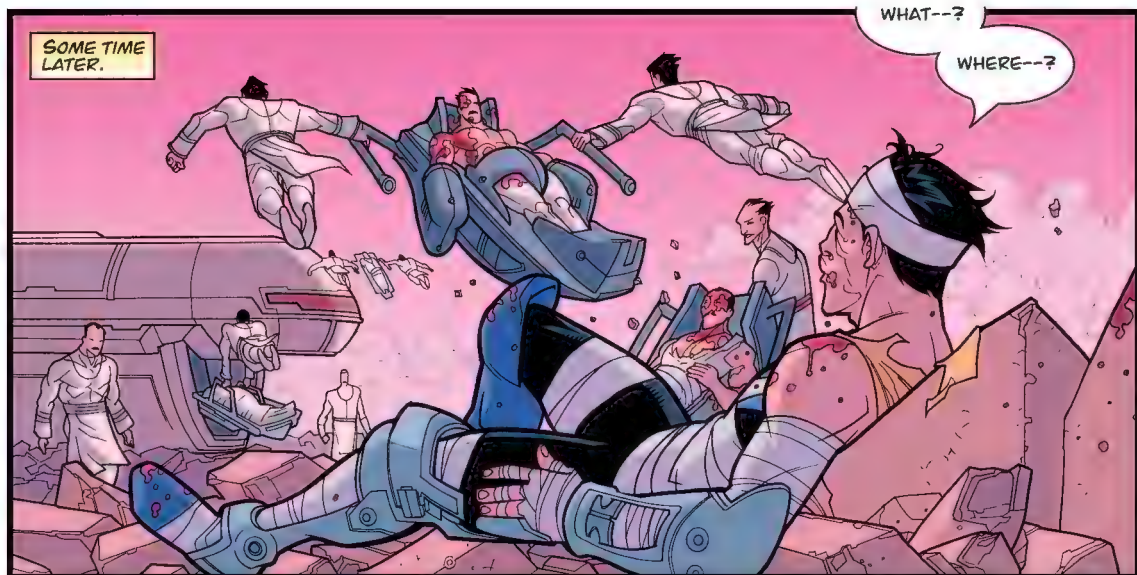


YOU'LL
DIE FOR
THIS!!

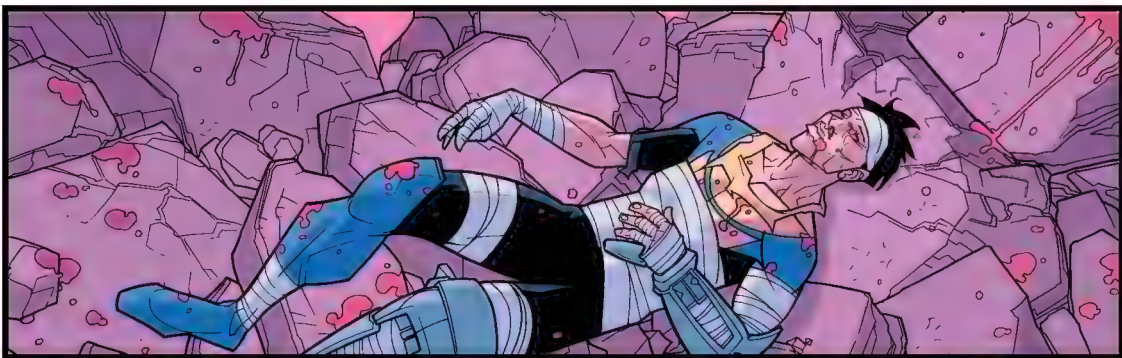
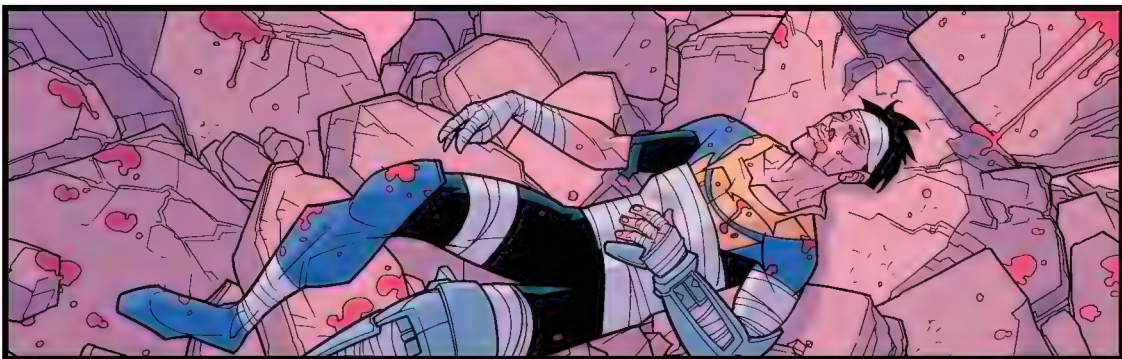
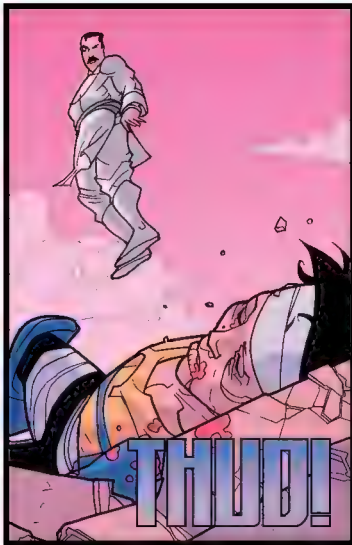


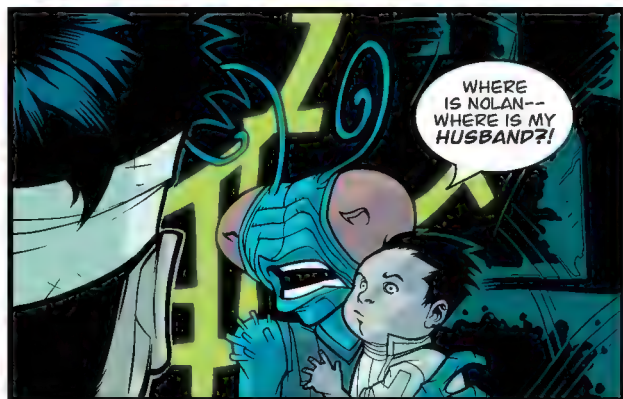
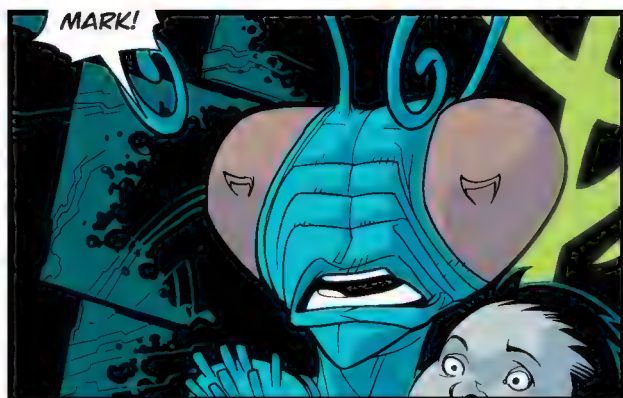
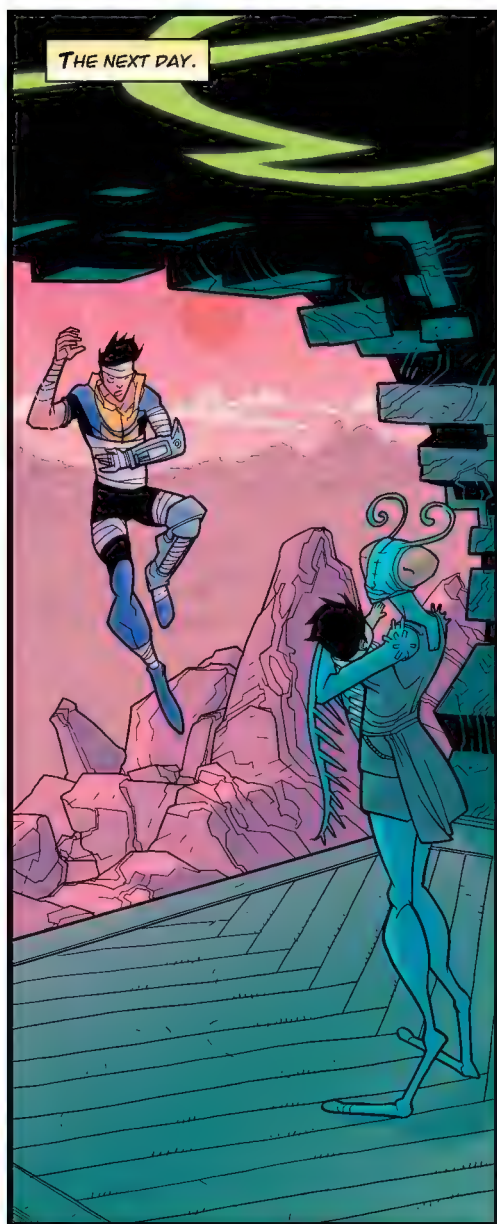


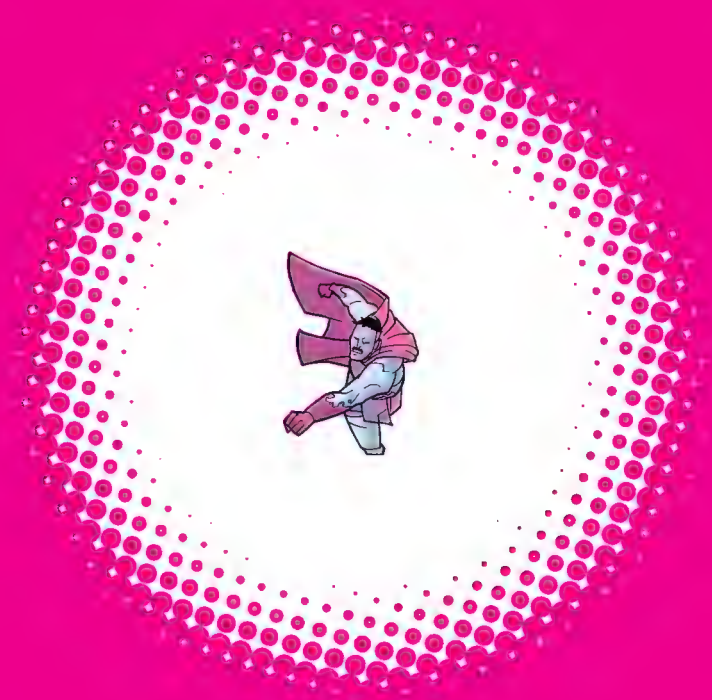




WHATEV--







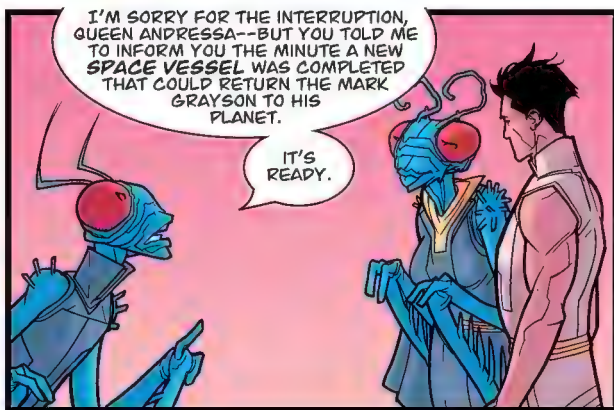
CHAPTER SIX





ALMOST--

--THERE.





EXCELLENT. MAKE THE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE. I WANT THE SHIP PREPARED FOR LAUNCH BEFORE OUR SUNS BEGIN THEIR DECENT.

YES, QUEEN. YOUR WILL BE DONE.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'M NOT THROUGH YET. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR ARCHITECTS I COULD HAVE THIS ENTIRE PALACE BUILT IN ANOTHER COUPLE WEEKS.

I CAN'T LEAVE NOW-- ESPECIALLY NOT TODAY.



I'D ASK YOU TO PLEASE NOT QUESTION ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS, MARK. YOUR TIME HERE HAS BEEN LONG--**TOO LONG**. THIS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORK YOU'VE **ALREADY** DONE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO APPEASE YOUR CONSCIENCE.

YOU HAVE A LIFE YOU MUST RETURN TO. I REGRET IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO REDISCOVER THE TECHNOLOGY TO GET YOU HOME. YOU MUST GO.

TWO MORE WEEKS IS **NOTHING** FOR ME... I'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE OVER A MONTH. TWO MORE WEEKS MAY PUT ANOTHER FEW GRAY HAIRS ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD BUT I ASSURE YOU--IT'LL BE **WORTH** IT WHEN I EXPLAIN TO HER ALL THAT I'VE **DONE!**



NO. YOU MUST GO, MARK. YOU MUST GO AND BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOU REMIND ME OF HIM--OF WHAT I LOST--



YEAH, MY DAD. I--



HE HAD TO COME BACK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ME CARE WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM.



AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE'S GONE. A LIFE ENDED AFTER LASTING SO LONG--IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM REAL.

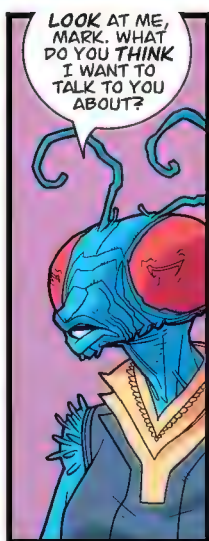
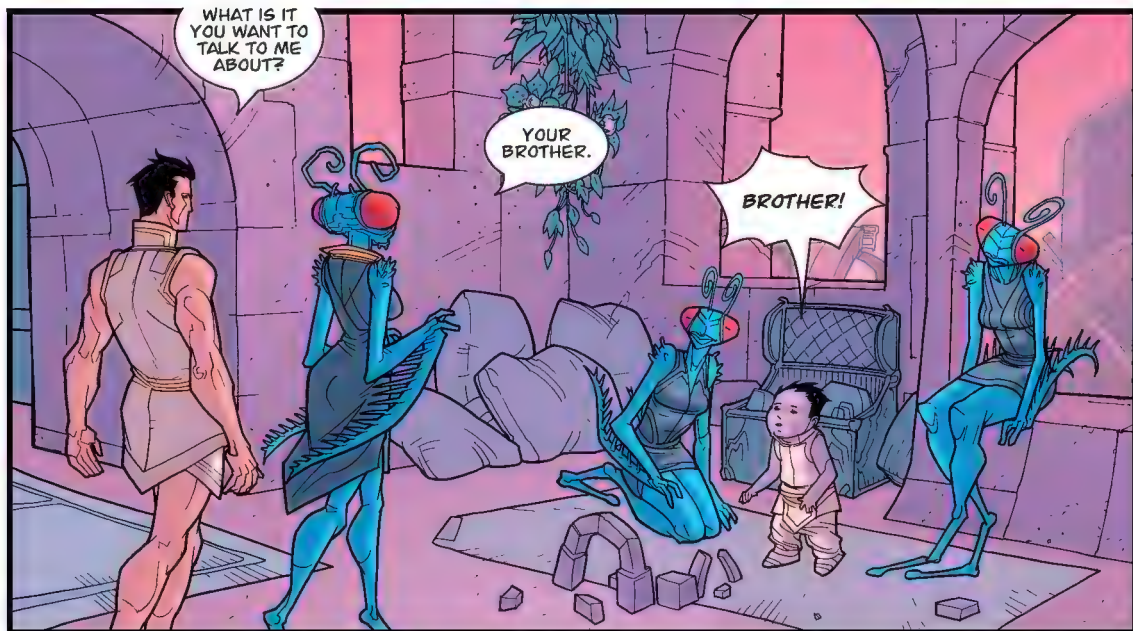


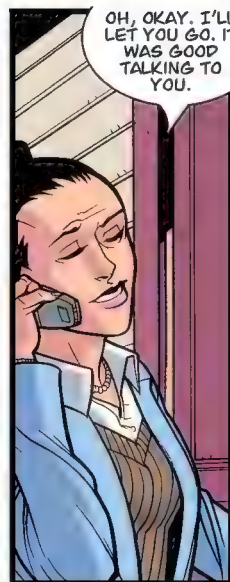
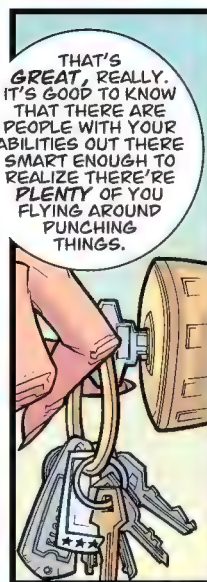
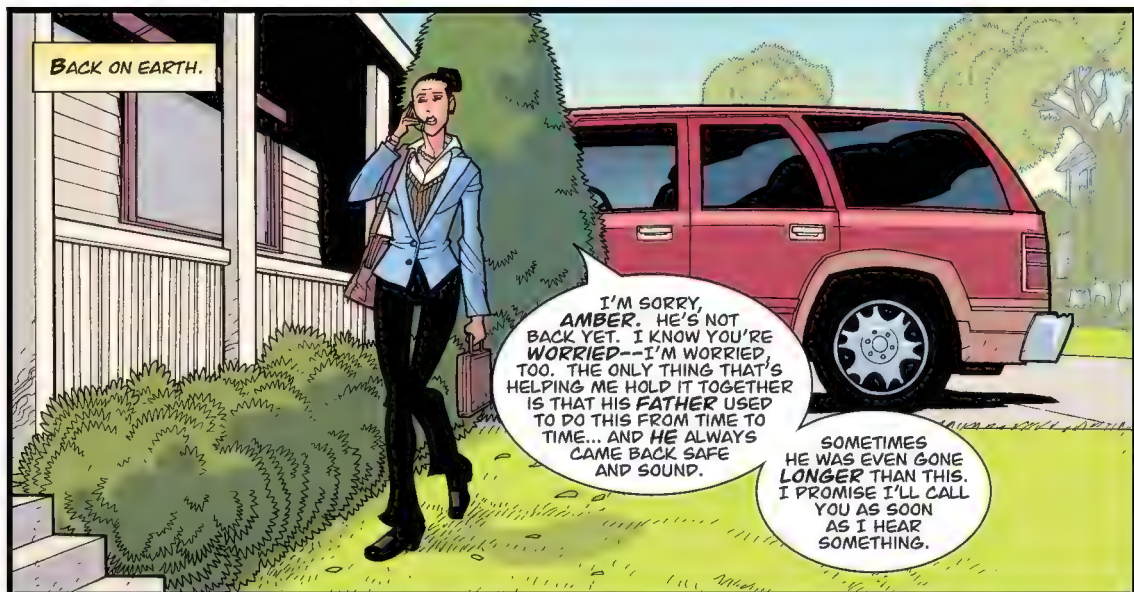
I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT--DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S **NOT** DEAD. HE'LL GET OUT OF IT SOME WAY.

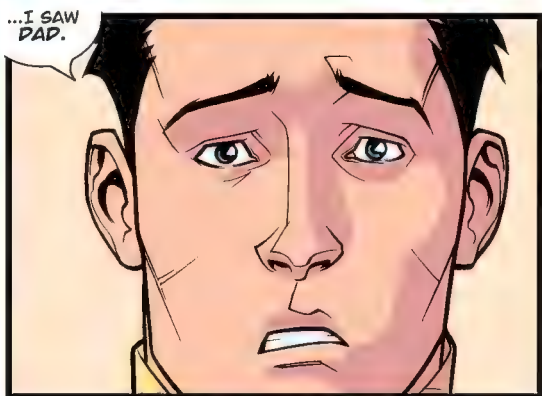
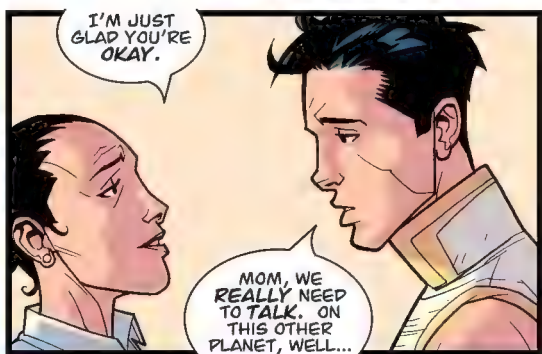
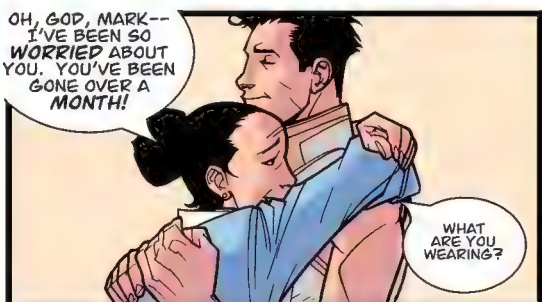
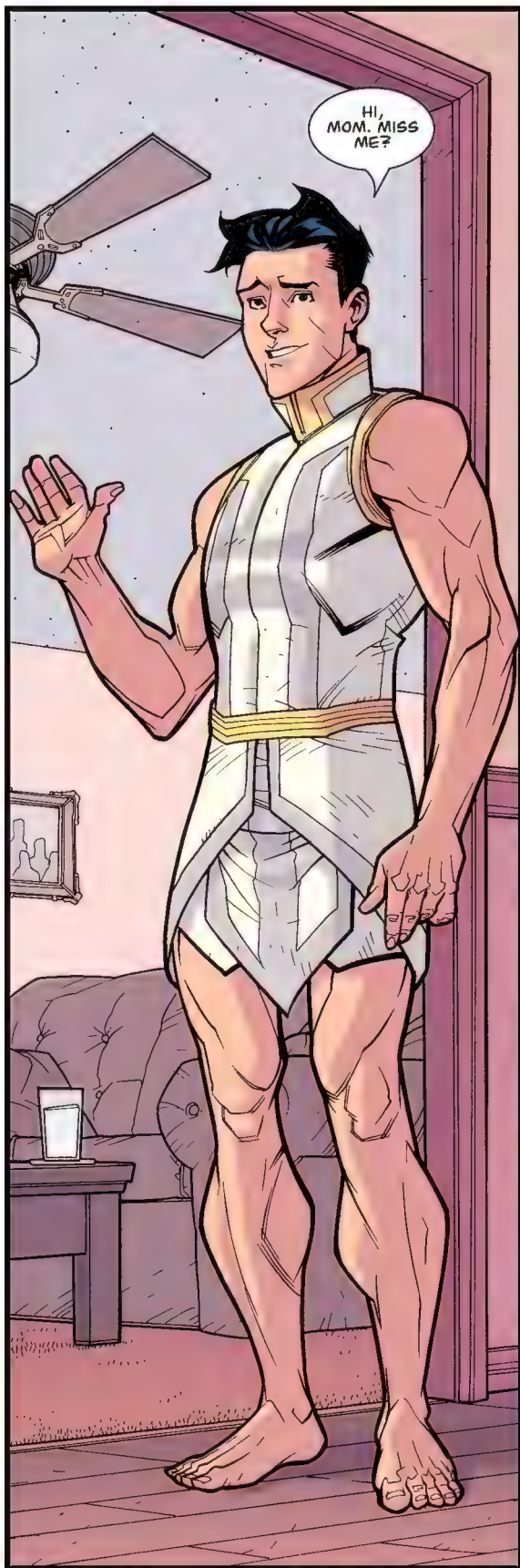


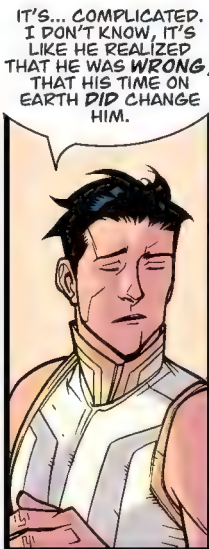
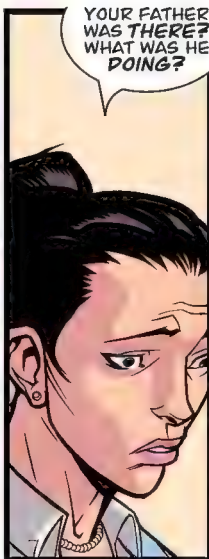
I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT. MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW.

NOW COME-- THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DISCUSS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE.











WHO--?

WHERE
DID HE--?

DID HE JUST
CALL YOU
BROTHER?

YEAH.

HE
DID.

WHAT ARE
YOU TELLING
ME? IS
HE--?

HE DID
START A NEW
LIFE. MOM,
I--

THEY
HAD A CHILD
TOGETHER.

THEY? SO
HE--AND THIS
IS YOUR
BROTHER?

HALF-
BROTHER--
BUT YEAH.

SO THIS--
WOMAN--
WHY DOESN'T
SHE HAVE THE
CHILD? WHY
IS HE HERE?
WHY DID YOU
BRING IT TO
ME, MARK?

THESE ALIENS--THEIR LIFE
SPANS ARE **SUPER
SHORT**, MOM. THIS
WOMAN, ANDRESSA--
THAT WAS HER NAME.
SHE WAS OLD
BY THE TIME
I LEFT.

THESE
PEOPLE ONLY
LIVE FOR
LIKE NINE
MONTHS.

BECAUSE OF
DAD'S, I DON'T
KNOW, DNA OR
WHATEVER--THIS
BABY HERE HAS A
LONGER LIFE SPAN
THAN THEM. HE'S
AGING FAST **NOW**, BUT
DAD SAID HE COULD
STILL LIVE FOR
HUNDREDS IF NOT
THOUSANDS
OF YEARS.

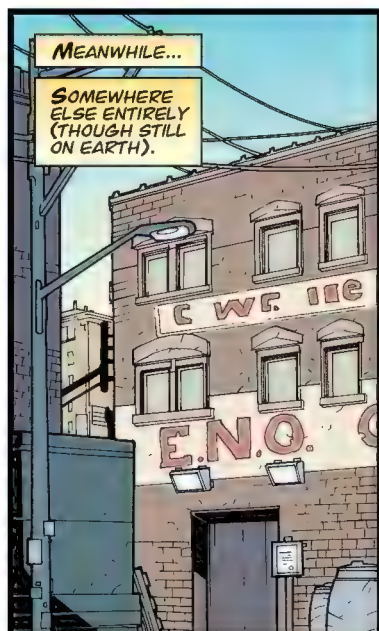
HE'D OUTLIVE
EVERYONE THERE.
THAT'S NO WAY FOR
HIM TO BE RAISED.
HE COULDN'T STAY
THERE.

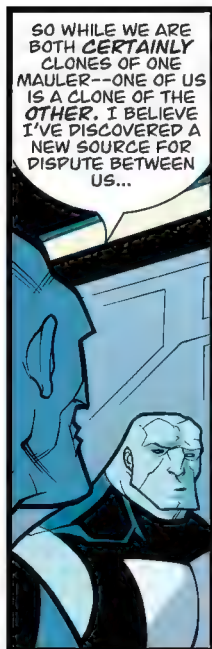
HE'S ABOUT TWO
MONTHS OLD RIGHT
NOW, AND HE LOOKS
LIKE HE'S ALMOST **TWO
YEARS** OLD. HIS AGING
IS ALREADY STARTING TO
SLOW DOWN, BUT HE
COULD BE AN ADULT
IN LIKE **FIVE
YEARS**.

I KNOW IT'S
HARD... I KNOW
IT'S **WEIRD**...
BUT I DON'T KNOW
WHAT ELSE TO DO
WITH HIM. I WAS
KIND OF HOPEING
YOU COULD
TAKE CARE OF
HIM.

MARK?

...





SO WHILE WE ARE BOTH **CERTAINLY** CLONES OF ONE MAULER--ONE OF US IS A CLONE OF THE **OTHER**. I BELIEVE I'VE DISCOVERED A NEW SOURCE FOR DISPUTE BETWEEN US...



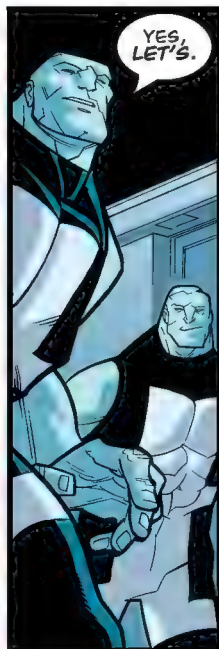
I DO NOT **SEE** IT. IT IS **CLEAR** TO ME THAT YOU ARE THE CLONE AND I AM THE ORIGINAL.



EXACTLY-- AND I FEEL THE **SAME** WAY.



THEN I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD **GET BACK TO WORK**.



YES, **LET'S**.



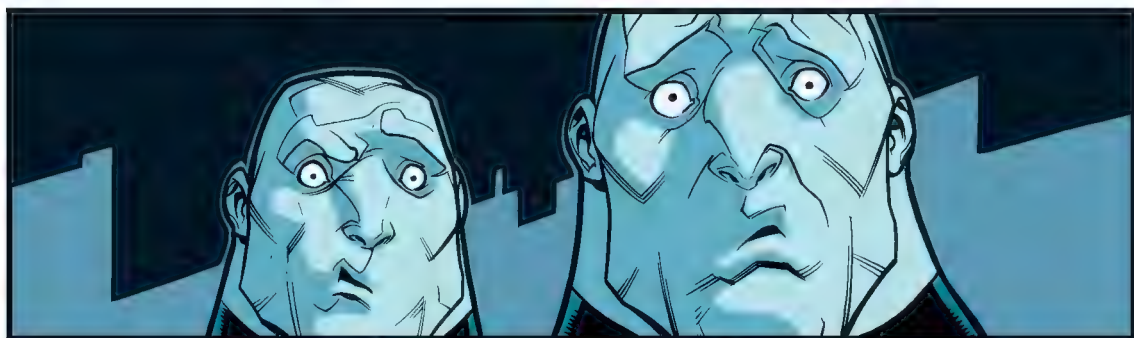
SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO-- JUST RETURN BACK TO OUR INITIAL GOAL? AFTER OUR ROBOTS WERE CONFISCATED, THE ATTEMPT TO USE THE **IMMORTAL** TO RECOVER THEM **BACKFIRED**--AND AFTER THAT WE WERE SIDETRACKED BY THE **ANGSTROM LEVY** JOB.

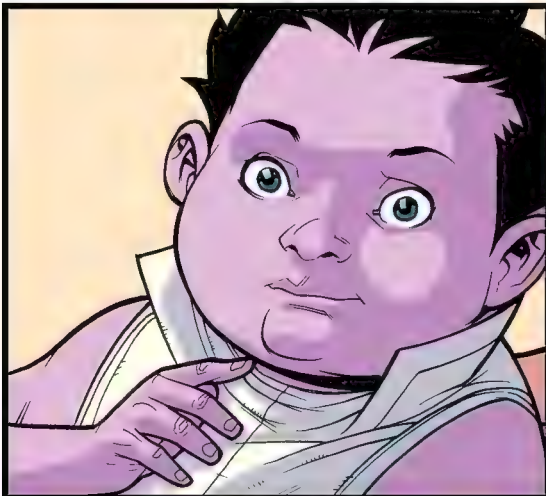
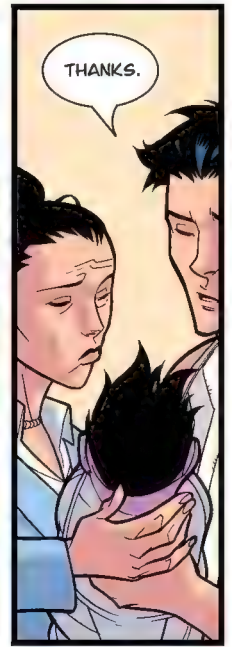
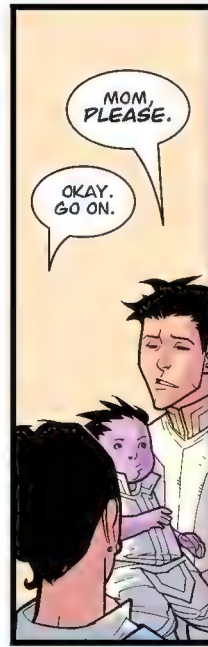
I SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF WITH THAT OPERATION.

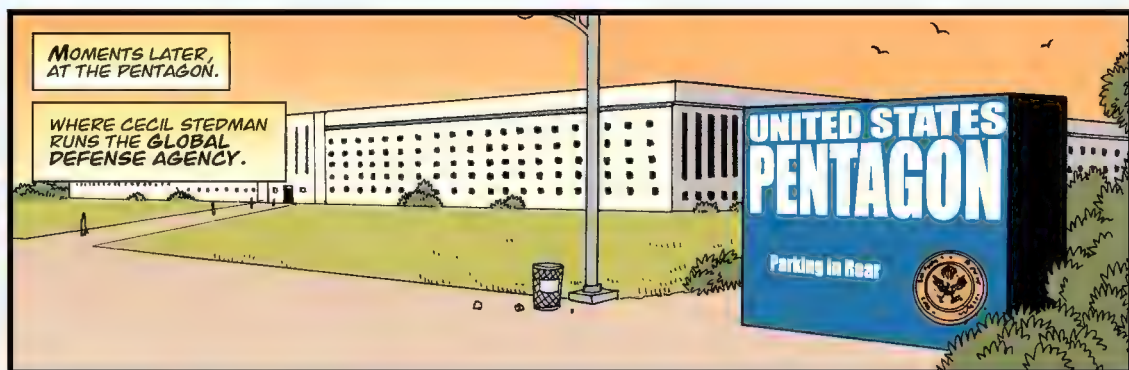
I AGREE, BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE WOULD NEED TO **SECURE FUNDS**--WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE ON A FEW **SIDE JOBS** BEFORE WE CAN RESUME OUR WORK.



I THINK I **MAY** BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH THAT.

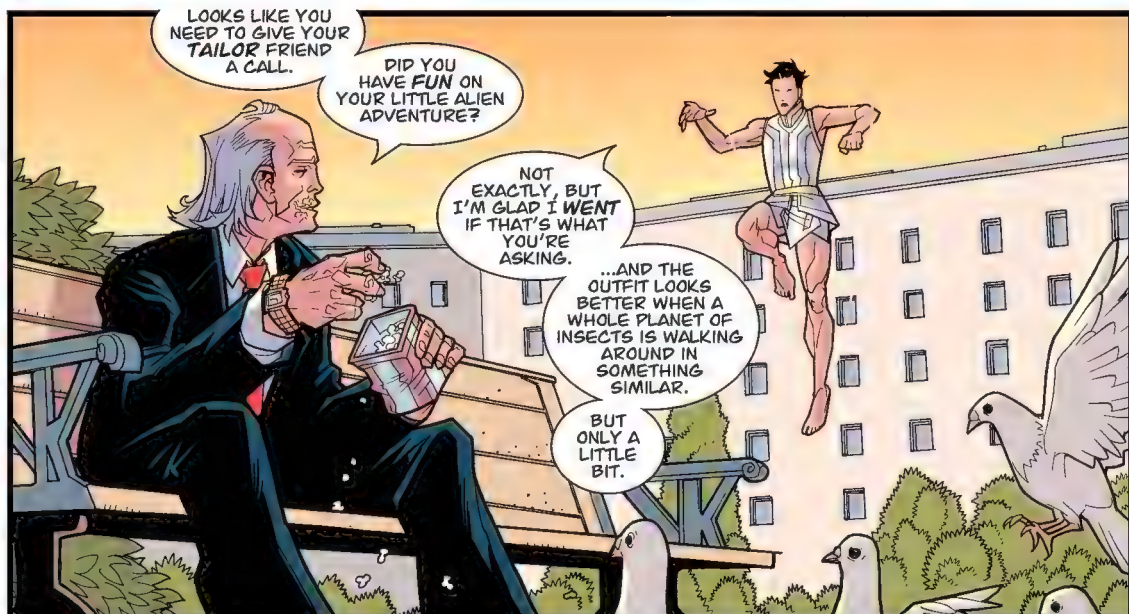






MOMENTS LATER,
AT THE PENTAGON.

WHERE CECIL STEPMAN
RUNS THE GLOBAL
DEFENSE AGENCY.



LOOKS LIKE YOU
NEED TO GIVE YOUR
TAILOR FRIEND
A CALL.

DID YOU
HAVE FUN ON
YOUR LITTLE ALIEN
ADVENTURE?

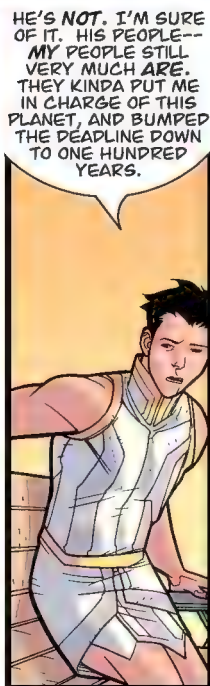
NOT
EXACTLY, BUT
I'M GLAD I WENT
IF THAT'S WHAT
YOU'RE ASKING.

...AND THE
OUTFIT LOOKS
BETTER WHEN A
WHOLE PLANET OF
INSECTS IS WALKING
AROUND IN
SOMETHING
SIMILAR.

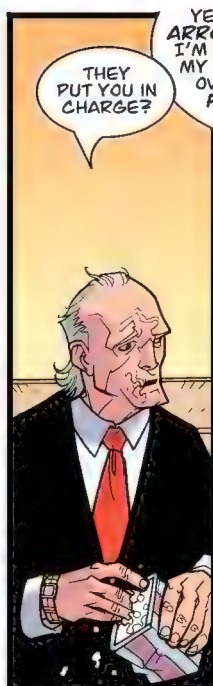
BUT ONLY A
LITTLE
BIT.



AND YOU SAW
YOUR FATHER.
DO YOU FEEL LIKE
HE'S NO LONGER
A THREAT TO THIS
PLANET?



HE'S NOT. I'M SURE
OF IT. HIS PEOPLE--
MY PEOPLE STILL
VERY MUCH ARE.
THEY KINDA PUT ME
IN CHARGE OF THIS
PLANET, AND BUMPED
THE DEADLINE DOWN
TO ONE HUNDRED
YEARS.

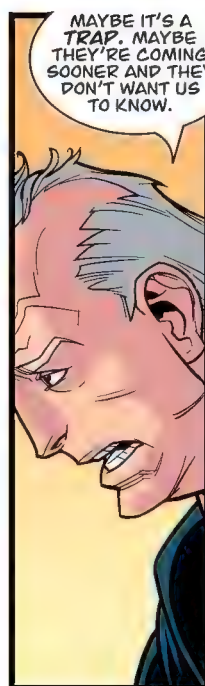


THEY
PUT YOU IN
CHARGE?



YEAH--THEY'RE SO
ARROGANT THEY THINK
I'M GOING TO COME TO
MY SENSES AND TAKE
OVER THIS PLANET
FOR THEM--OR
SOMETHING.

I DON'T
KNOW, MAYBE
THEY JUST DON'T
CARE IF I HELP
THEM OR NOT. MAYBE
ONE HUNDRED YEARS
IS THE SOONEST
THEY CAN GET OUT
HERE TO TAKE
OVER.



MAYBE IT'S A
TRAP. MAYBE
THEY'RE COMING
SOONER AND THEY
DON'T WANT US
TO KNOW.

WOW.

I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.

SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

NOTHING. PUT THAT THOUGHT OUT OF YOUR MIND. IF WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE--IF THEY SENT SO MUCH AS **FOUR** VILTRUMITES TO THIS PLANET THERE WOULDN'T BE A DAMN THING WE COULD DO.

SO ALL WE CAN REALLY DO IS WAIT... AND HOPE SOMETHING COMES ALONG THAT ALLOWS US TO FIGHT THEM.

THAT MAKES SENSE.

NOW THAT WE'VE MOVED PAST THAT.

YOUR BROTHER.

YEAH.

LET YOUR MOTHER KNOW THAT WE CAN HELP WITH THAT. HAVING ANOTHER VILTRUMITE RAISED BY HER TO BE A FINE UPSTANDING CITIZEN LIKE YOU IS IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS.

WE COULD ARRANGE LEGITIMATE ADOPTION PAPERS AND GIVE THE CHILD BIRTH RECORDS AND EVEN EMPLOY SOME LOW-TECH HOLOGRAPHICS TO MATCH HIS SKIN COLOR.

THE ADVANCED AGING WILL BE TRICKY. WE COULDN'T ALLOW THE CHILD TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE HIS... UNIQUENESS... SO WE WOULD PROVIDE A PRIVATE TUTOR.

WE COULD MAKE THIS VERY EASY ON HER. OR WE COULD HELP YOU LOCATE A FOSTER FAMILY... IF SHE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILD.

I'LL LET HER KNOW.

GOOD. NOW I'VE GOT TO REPRIMAND YOU.

I KNOW THIS TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST. SEEING YOUR FATHER, GETTING MORE INFO ON THE VILTRUMITES, YOUR BROTHER... BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISOBEY ME AGAIN.

HOLD ON, YOU'RE TELLING ME I WAS RIGHT TO GO--BUT THAT I **SHOULDN'T** DO THIS AGAIN?

THAT'S KINDA SILLY. DID I EVEN MISS ANYTHING WHEN I WAS GONE THESE LAST TWO MONTHS?

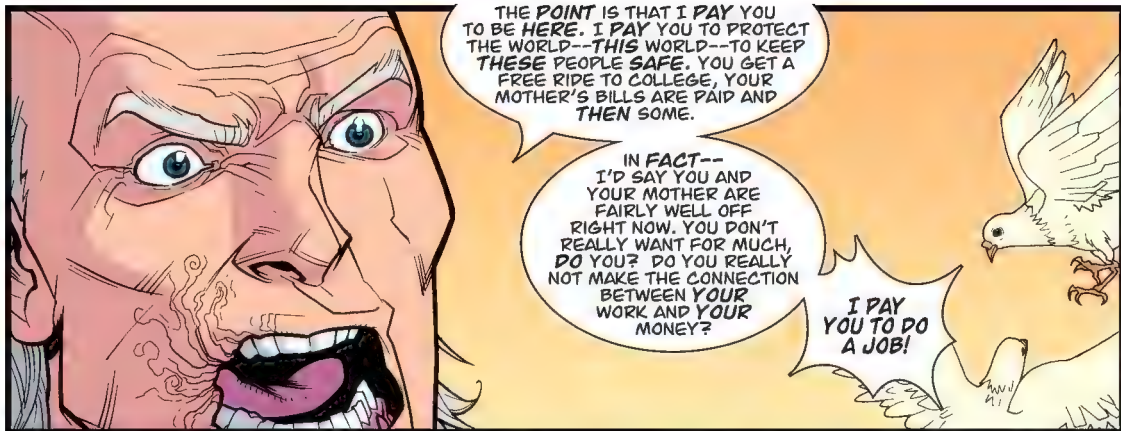
A BEING CALLED **OMNIPOTUS** TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. I HAD TO AMASS ALMOST THE ENTIRE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY AND EVEN HIRE ON THOSE **CAPIES** BASTARDS FROM NEW YORK TO HELP OUT.

WE ALMOST DIDN'T WIN THAT ONE.

BUT YOU DID.

THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MARK. THE POINT IS YOU WERE NEEDED.

ACTUALLY, I THINK THE POINT IS THAT AN **ALIEN WORLD** WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED IF I HAD STAYED HERE--AND WHILE I WAS GONE--YOU GUYS SAVED THIS PLANET WITHOUT ME.



THE POINT IS THAT I PAY YOU TO BE HERE. I PAY YOU TO PROTECT THE WORLD--THIS WORLD--TO KEEP THESE PEOPLE SAFE. YOU GET A FREE RIDE TO COLLEGE, YOUR MOTHER'S BILLS ARE PAID AND THEN SOME.

IN FACT-- I'D SAY YOU AND YOUR MOTHER ARE FAIRLY WELL OFF RIGHT NOW. YOU DON'T REALLY WANT FOR MUCH, DO YOU? DO YOU REALLY NOT MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND YOUR MONEY?

I PAY YOU TO DO A JOB!

I DO WHAT I DO BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO. I'VE GOT THESE POWERS AND I'M TRYING MY BEST TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THEM. I DON'T DO THIS BECAUSE YOU PAY ME.

I ALLOW YOU TO PAY ME BECAUSE YOU PUT ME WHERE I NEED TO BE. YOU HELP ME DO MY JOB. YOU THINK I'D BE AT HOME PLAYING VIDEO GAMES IF YOU WEREN'T PAYING ME TO DO THIS?

IF SOMETHING COMES ALONG AND I THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO--I'M GOING TO DO IT.

YOU'RE TREATING ME LIKE THIS AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN TELLING ME I DID SOMETHING WRONG. ARE YOU JUST UPSET BECAUSE I'M NOT A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER TAKING ORDERS WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS?!

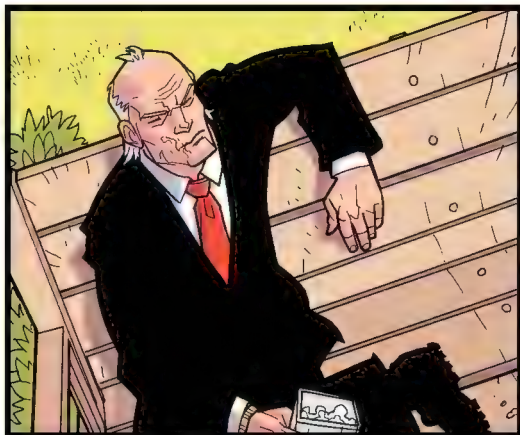
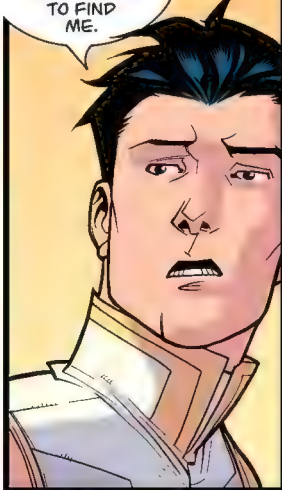


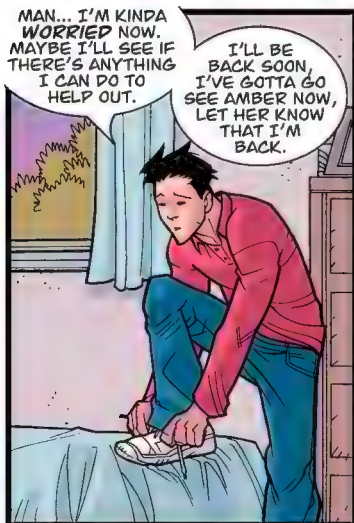
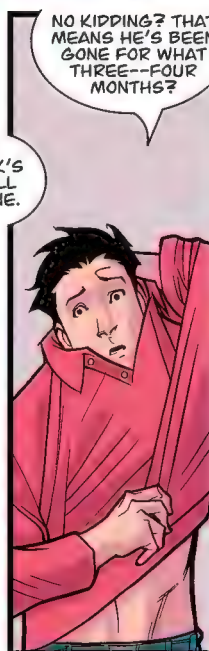
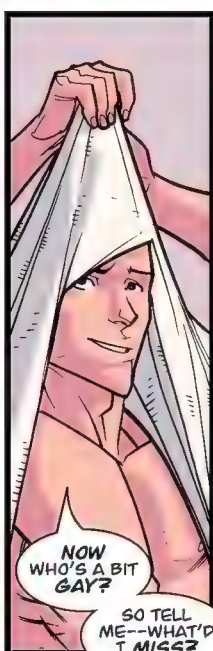
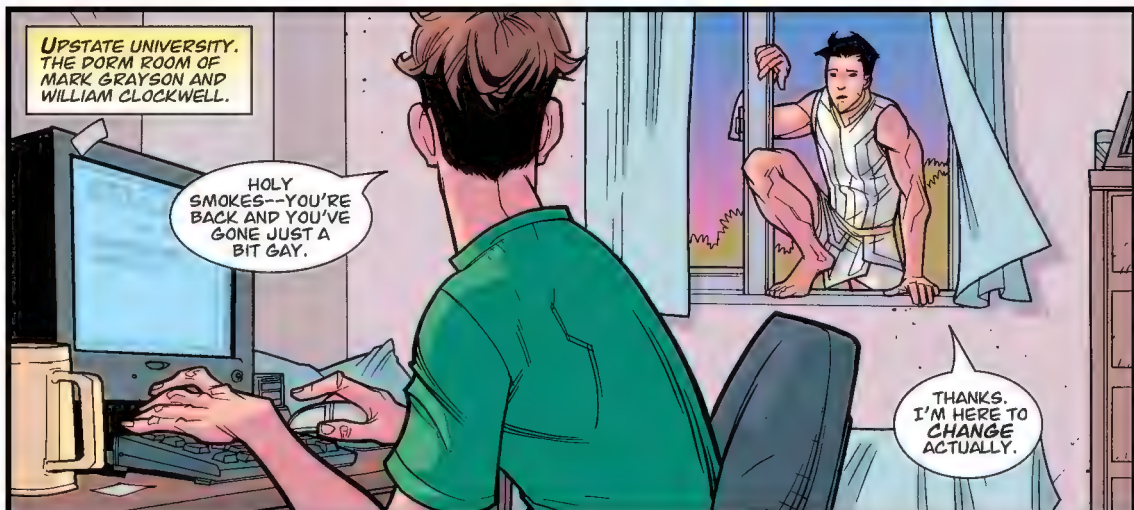
MARK. CALM DOWN. YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO WORK WITH ME.

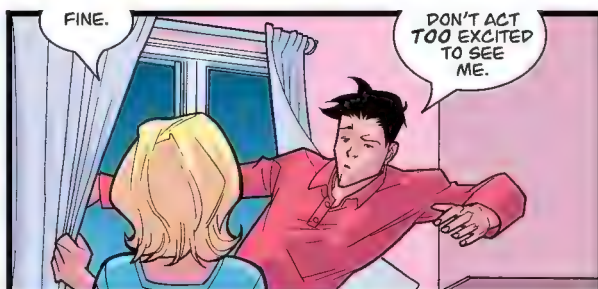
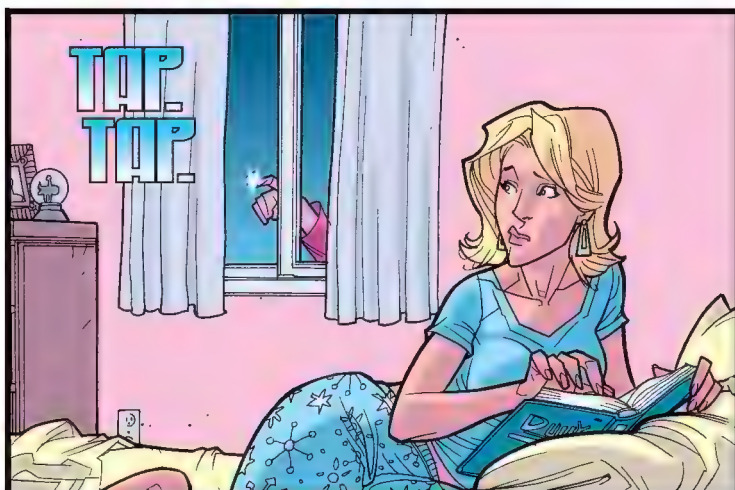
I JUST NEED YOU TO TRUST MY JUDGMENT IN MORE CASES.

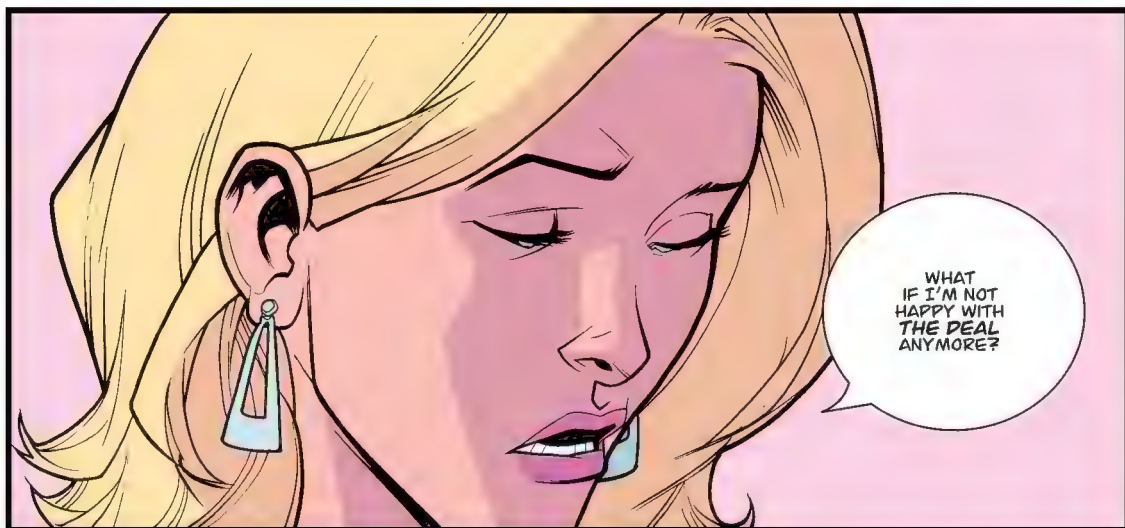
I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR MY MOTHER AND ME. REALLY, I DO-- BUT I'LL START TRUSTING YOUR JUDGMENT MORE AFTER I DO SOMETHING WRONG. RIGHT NOW I DON'T THINK MY JUDGMENT WAS IN THE WRONG HERE.

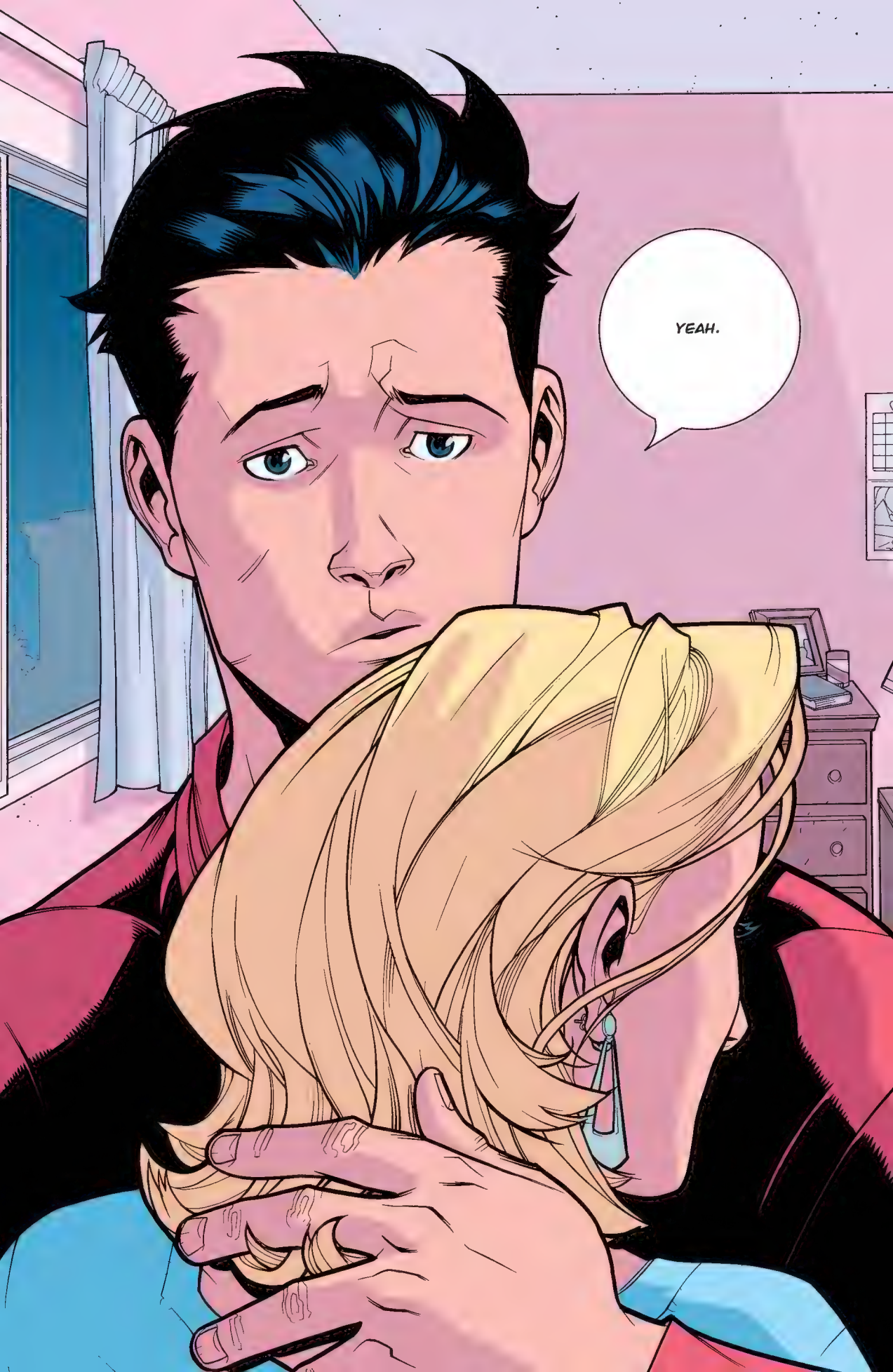
I'VE GOT A COUPLE MORE STOPS. IF YOU NEED ME, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.



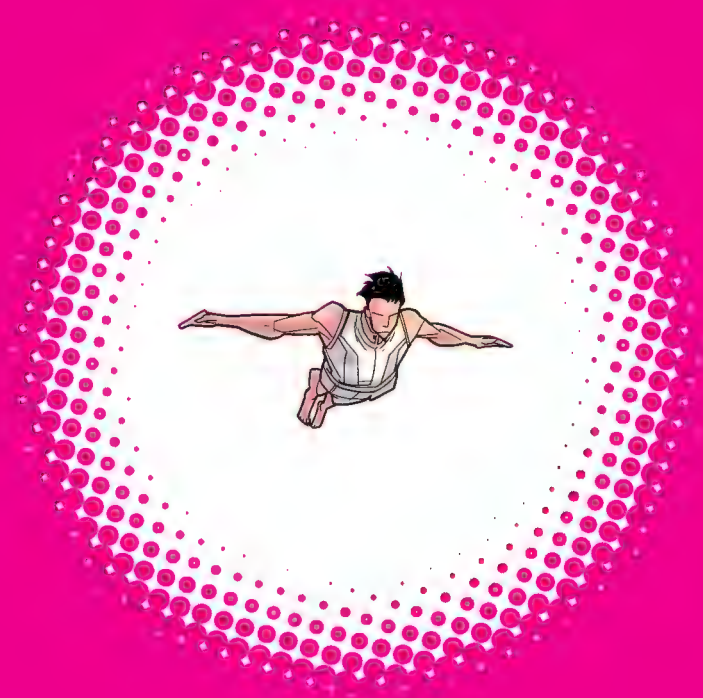




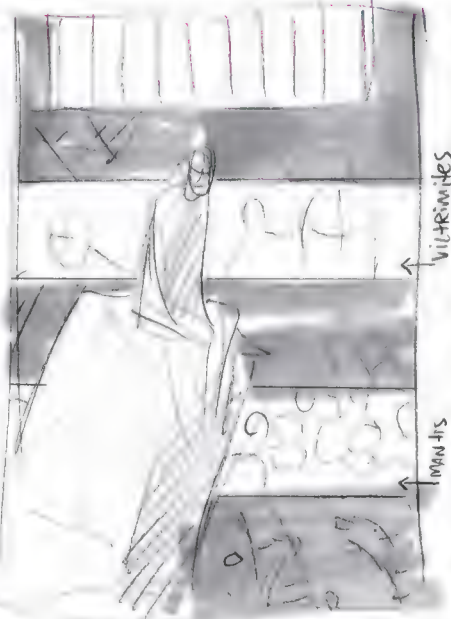




YEAH.



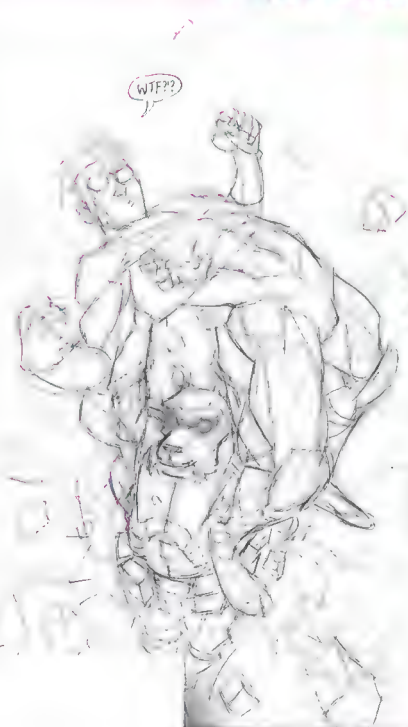
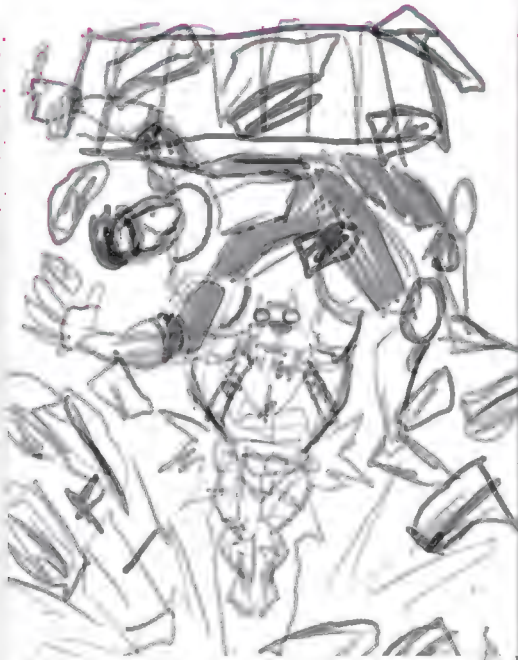
TPB 6



When it came time to reprint Volumes 1 and 2 of this series I had Cory Walker go back and do new covers for both. We used the original design for the first issue's cover, but with a different figure, for volume 1. (some of you may already know this.) That cover had a figure in the foreground, posing and panels behind it. I dug it. I'm also insanely anal about this stuff. When volume 4 was accidentally printed with a gloss finish on the cover instead of matte, I freaked out, then grew to like it, and then switched over to glossy covers on all the subsequent printings and new volumes of this book. I like things to match, sometimes a little too much. Case in point... these trade paperback covers.

After the cover for Volume 1 was changed I suggested Cory put panels on the volume 2 cover... and while the cover for volume 3 had been drawn, it hadn't been printed yet, so he went in and added panels to that cover too. Then, starting with volume 4, young Ryan Ottley took over, and he continued the trend. But the thing is, by the time we got to volume 6, you kinda run out of cool flying poses for Invincible... or at least, five is more than enough. Also, Bill Crabtree HATES these covers. With three or so panels on the page and a character that's blue and yellow, he has to come up with other colors to make the panels in order to pull them back from the figure and make it pop of the page... without using blue and yellow, because that's the color the figure is. Anyway, he hates it... and with good reason. But I like things to match.

When it came time to draw this cover, Ryan suggested doing something a LITTLE different. I agreed, it was time for a LITTLE bit of a change... and it still kinda matches. So I can sleep at night.



On this page you'll see my crappy layout for issue 25 and Ryan's attempt at making it not suck (he succeeded). From time to time when I have an idea for a cover I'll do a little layout. It's easier than describing it in email I guess. Ryan did a great job with this cover. Notice Science Dog was originally smiling. I had Ryan change it because it made him look silly. And Science Dog should never look silly, he's the coolest comic book character EVER.



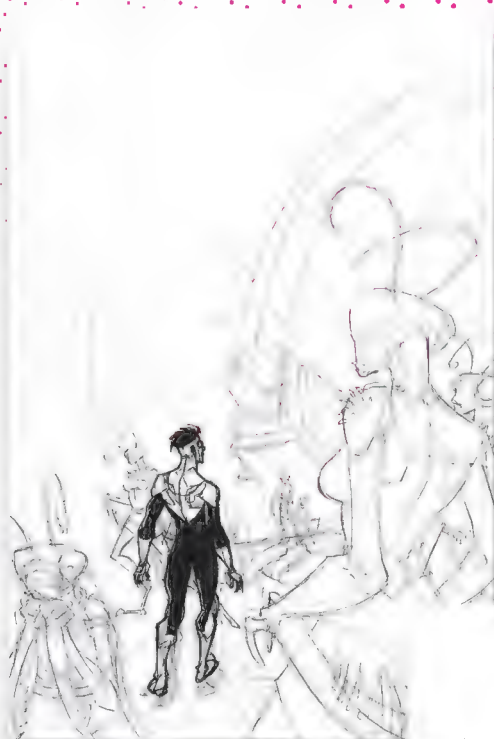
26



26

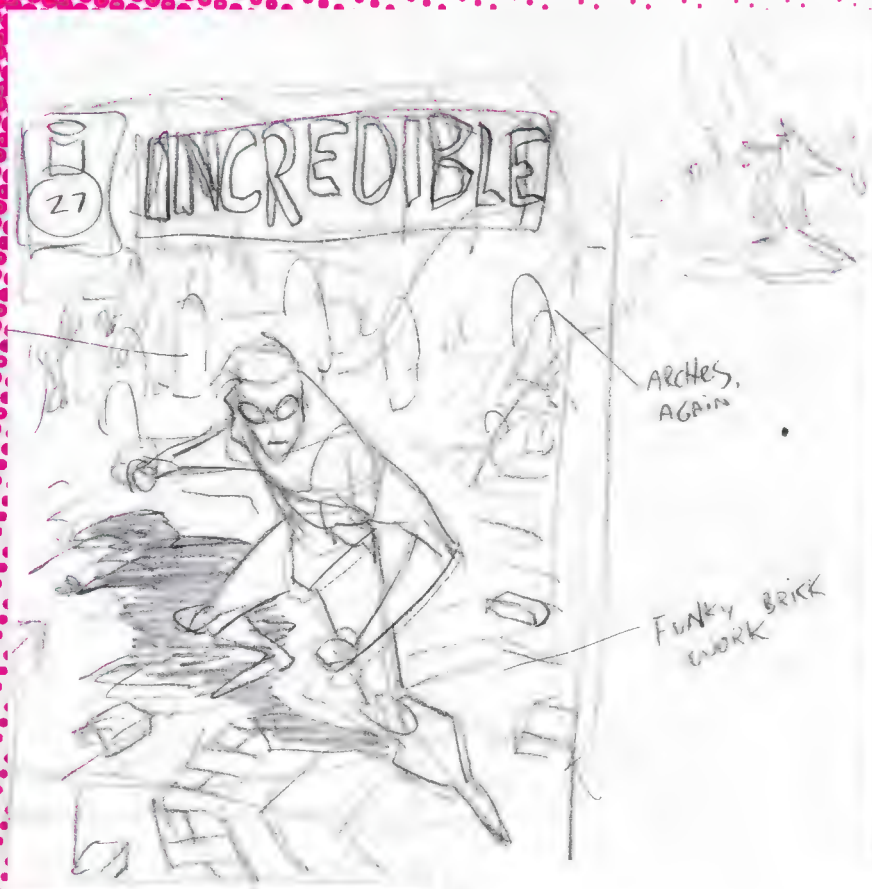


Here's Ryan's sketches for the cover to issue 26. I told Ryan "Have Invincible walking around the alien city, looking around." Not a lot to go on, I know... but Ryan knows what he's doing and like always, ran with the idea and did something great with it.

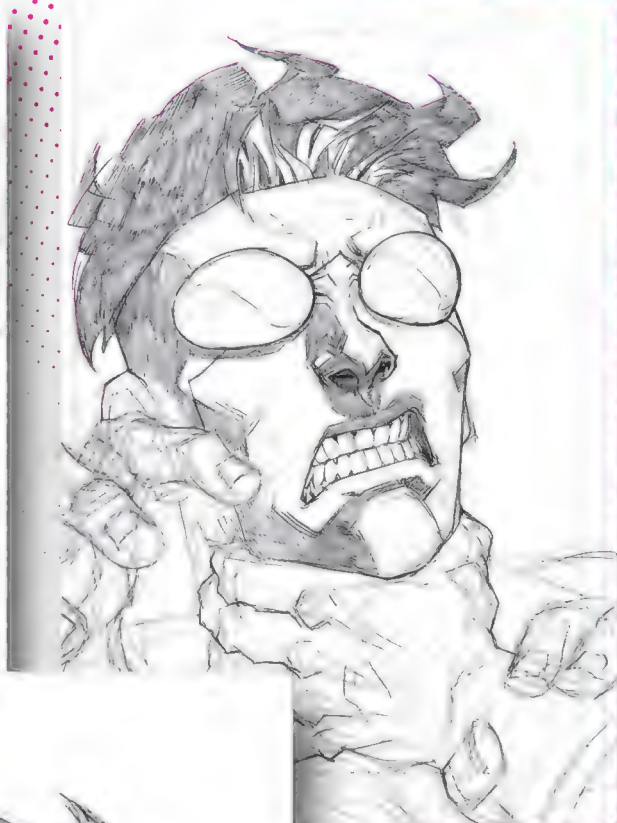
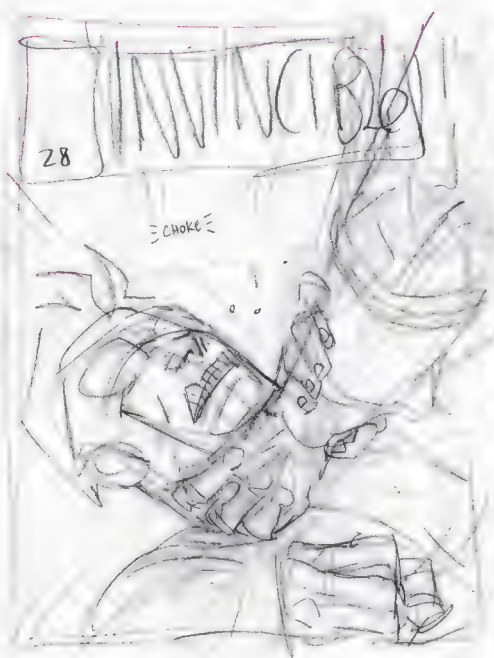


More from the cover of 26.

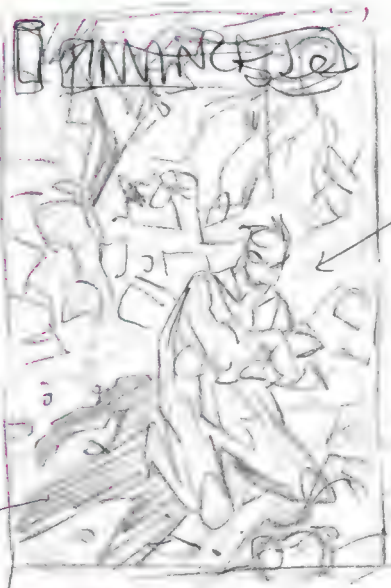




Here's Ryan's layout and the pencils for the figure of the cover to 27. Ryan got the title wrong. He always forgets what this book is called. Idiot.



I'm an idiot. I don't like to spoil things on covers. If anything I like to trick readers into thinking something else on covers. I was also REALLY worried about people expecting Nolan to return in issue 25, it being an anniversary issue and all... and y'know, the natural place for this to happen. So when it came time to do this cover I wanted a Viltrumite choking Mark, but I didn't want it to be OBVIOUS that it was a Viltrumite. So I asked Ryan to draw less of the arm so they it wouldn't be so recognizable as a Viltrumite sleeve. I didn't want people to think it was Nolan choking Mark. But I'm stupid... people would have thought it was the Viltrumites from issue 23... not Nolan. I don't know what I was thinking. In the end, I with the cover had been more like this sketch, still a good cover, but it would have been better if I hadn't stuck my nose in.

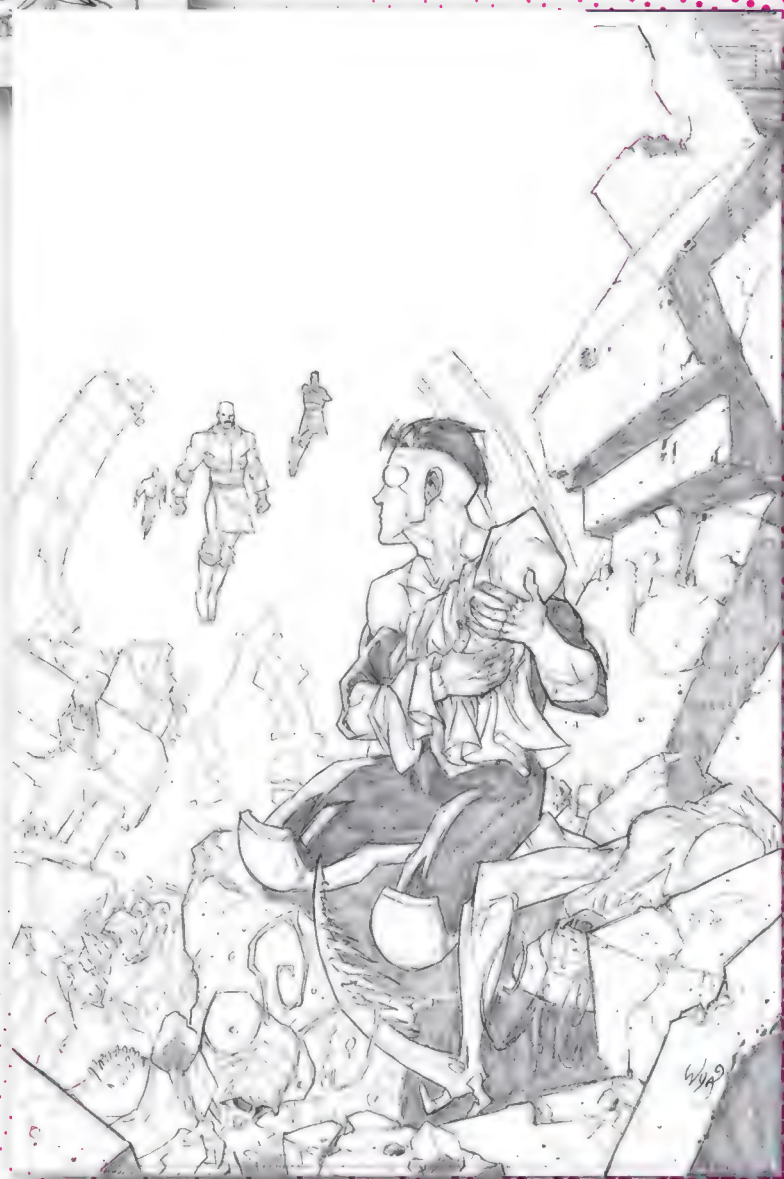


pissed?
SAD?
LAUGHING
Hysterically?

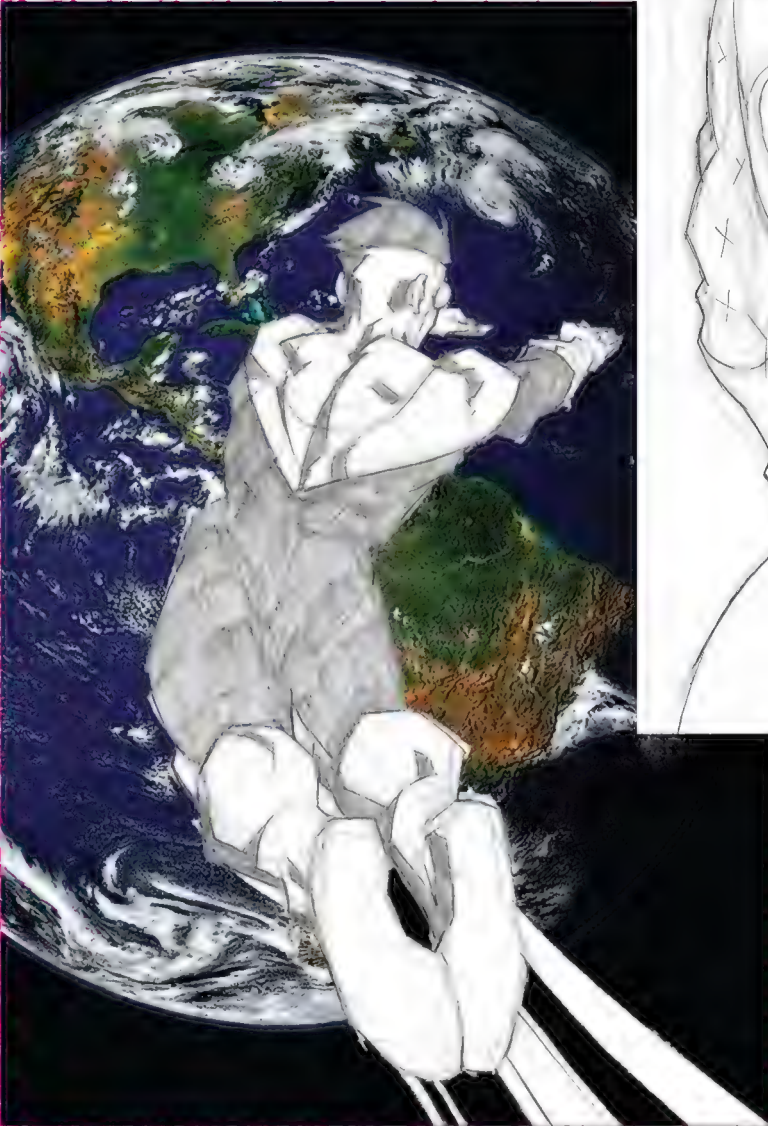
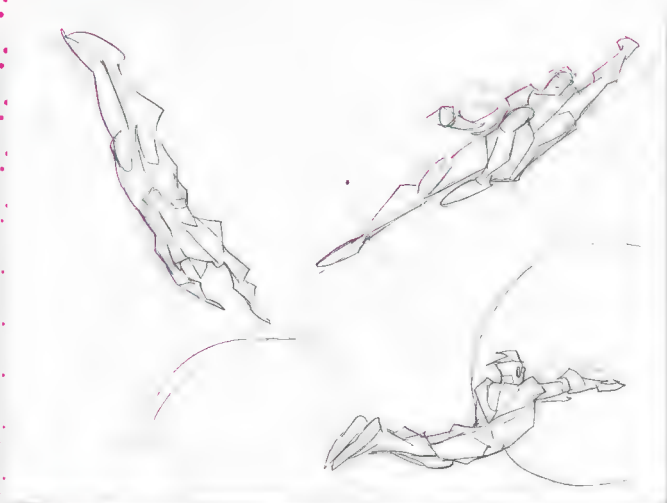
SHADOW

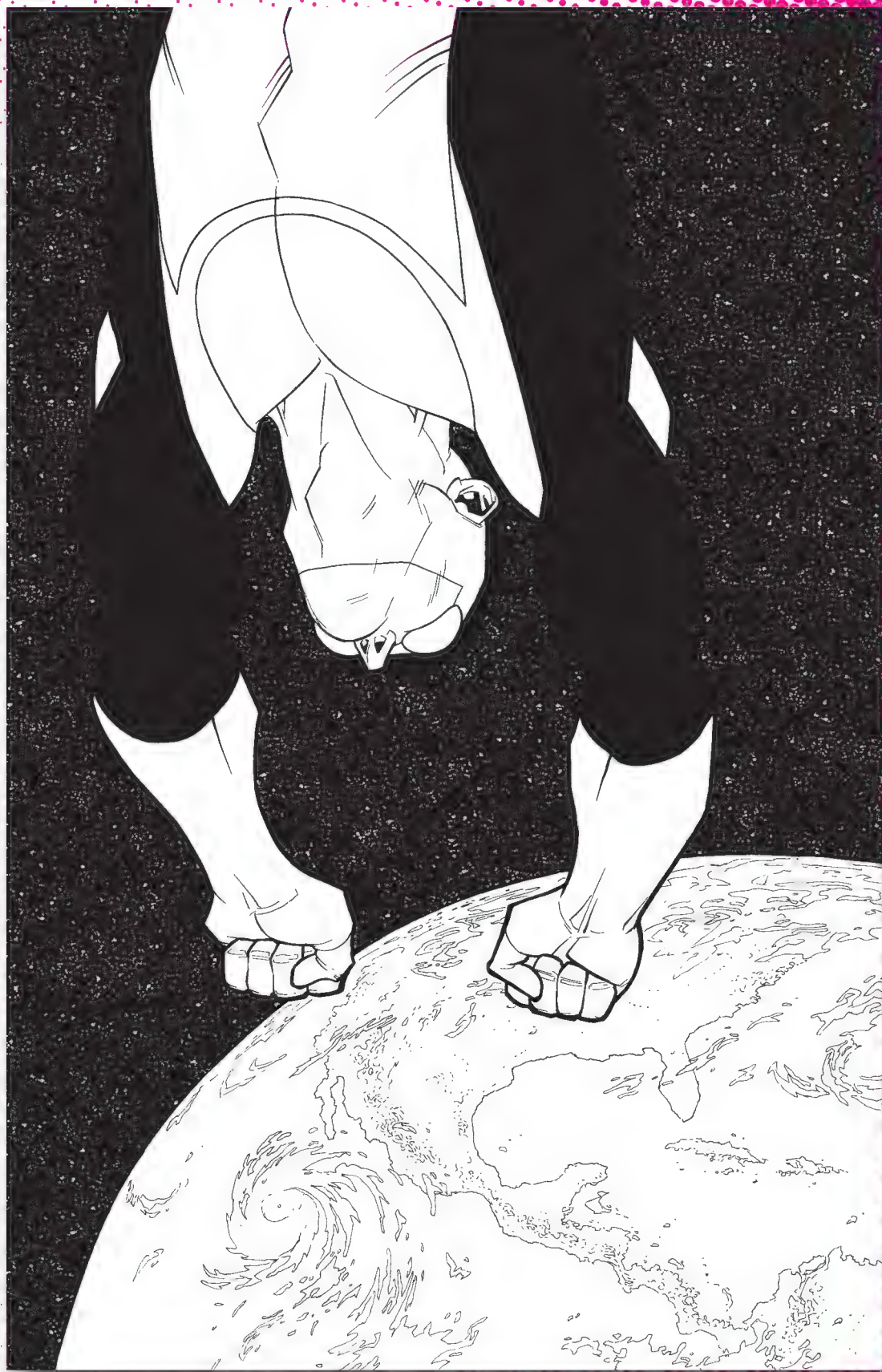


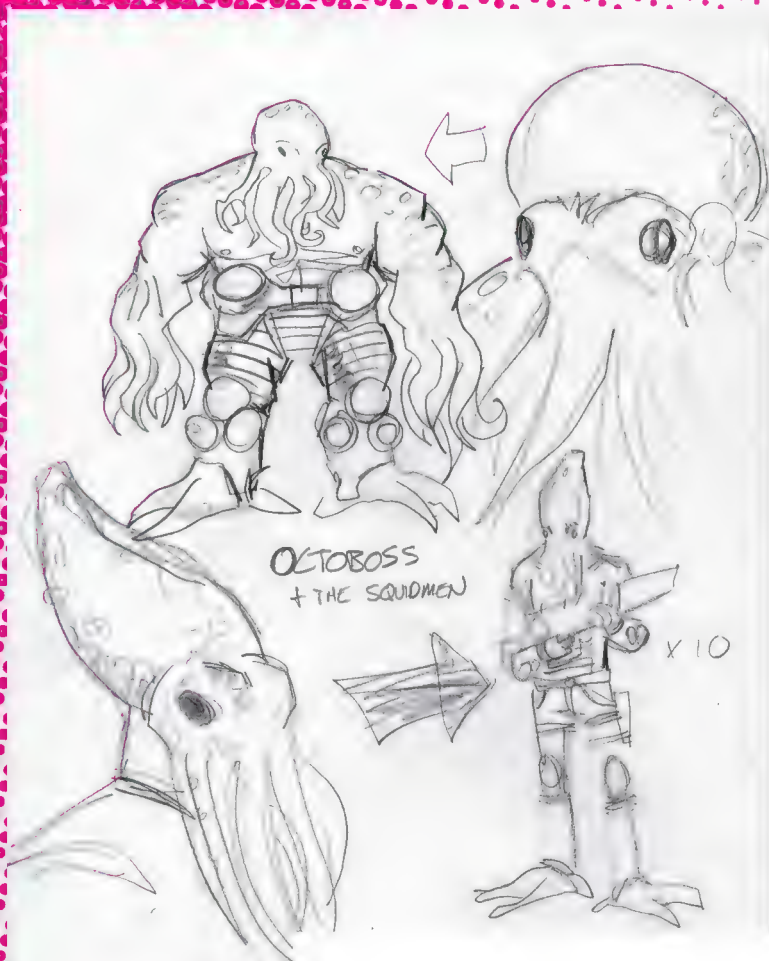
Issue 29 cover sketches.



For the cover to issue 30 I wanted a shot of Mark flying home. Ryan did the first version with him cut off at the waist, seen here in sketch form and on the following page in its full glory, but I guess he didn't like it. I dug it. I thought it was fine. I may have joked about it looking weird with Mark being cut off at the waist but still, I was fine with it, really. But Ryan wanted to redo it and I was fine with that. So he did the second version. Seen here in sketch form with the most realistic drawing of the Earth I've EVER seen.

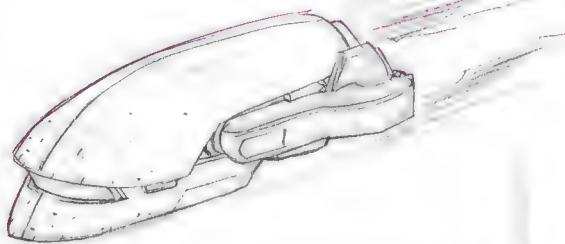






My design for Octoboss and then Ryan's tweaks on my designs. I DARE you to guess which one is which!



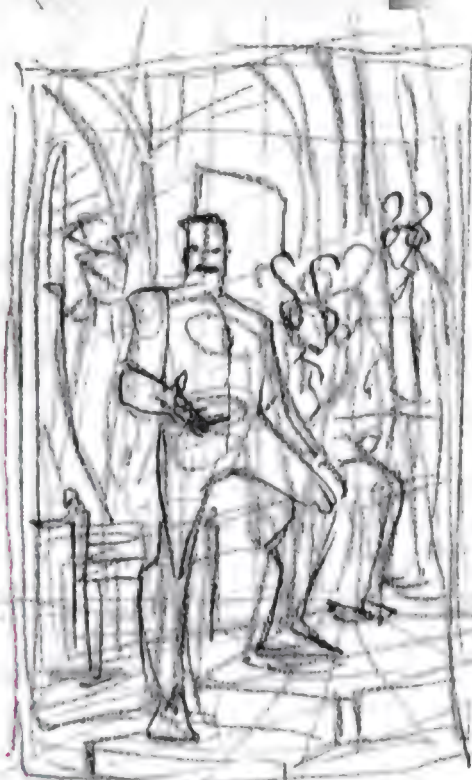


Ryan's designs for the Mantis people and this ship they bring Mark to their planet in. Yeah, I didn't name the Mantis people... or their planet. I put it off and then never got around to it. I'm totally a hack.





When designing the Mantis people Ryan did this kissing sketch for fun. I loved it... thought it was damn funny so I just HAD to write it into the book. Thank Ryan, for that scene. Also on this page, Ryan's sketch for the last page of issue 25.





Ryan's a goofball, no two ways about it. Hence the exposed BUTT in the pencils of page four of issue 26 seen here on this page. I wasn't feeling this page for whatever reason. The angle wasn't what I was picturing and for a silent page, that dead space at the top was just unnecessary. So I did a rough little layout to show Ryan what I was picturing. People often ask me why I don't just draw this book myself... no, you're right, that's not true at all.



26 4

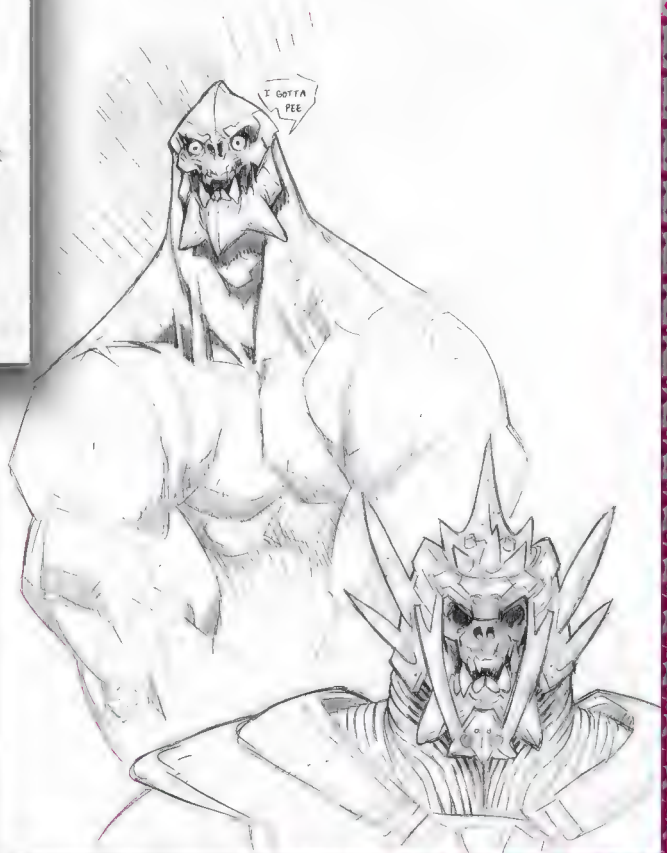


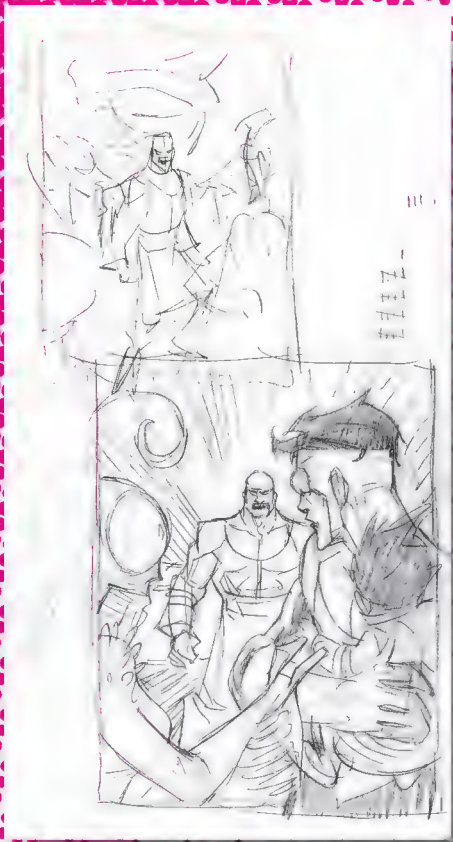
Omnipotus took a lot of work to nail down. All I knew was that he was kinda alien looking, big and buff and his face would start out as a skull and as he absorbed the life of whatever dimension he was in flesh would start to grow back on his face. Oh, and I didn't want any eyes, I wanted them to be totally black. So yeah, I didn't give Ryan anything to work with and still... he did a great job.



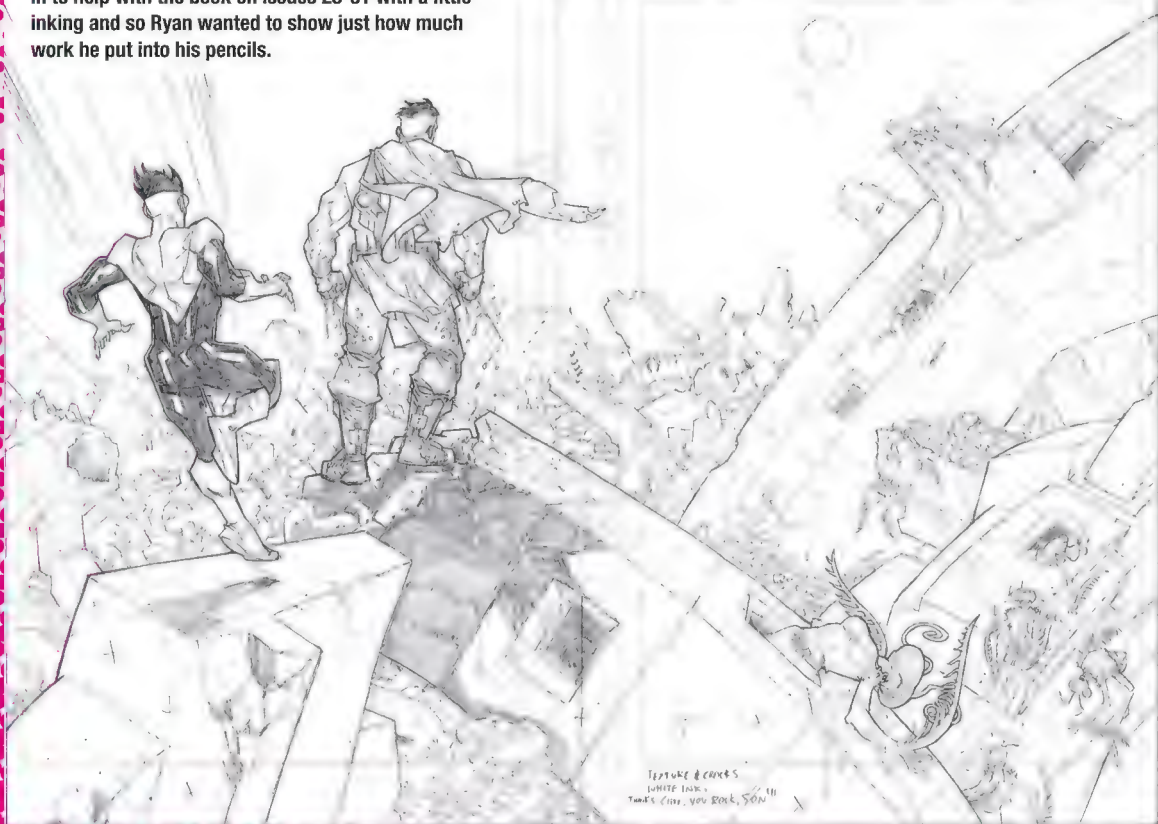


More Omnipotus stuff. I really like the other designs for this character, maybe we'll use them and make a new guy for the book at some point... maybe.





Funny story. I forgot to finish writing the last panel on page 8 of issue 27. So in the script it read "wide panel: Black Samson" and then the dialogue. But it was supposed to be Samson tackling Omnipotus. Sadly, Ryan had to redraw that panel. Also on this page some of Ryan's pencils. Cliff Rathburn pitched in to help with the book on issues 28-31 with a little inking and so Ryan wanted to show just how much work he put into his pencils.



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More glorious pencils from Ryan. I always love how his pencils look when he sends them to me. These pages in particular are just stunning. The two page spread seen here is probably my favorite thing Ryan's ever drawn. I'm sure he'll top it in a few issues, though... he always does.

-Robert Kirkman



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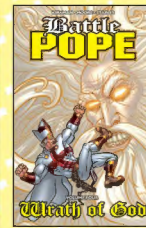
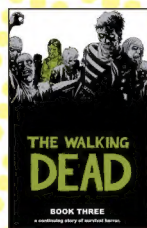
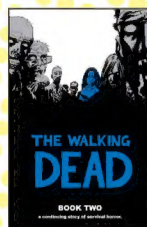
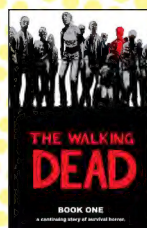
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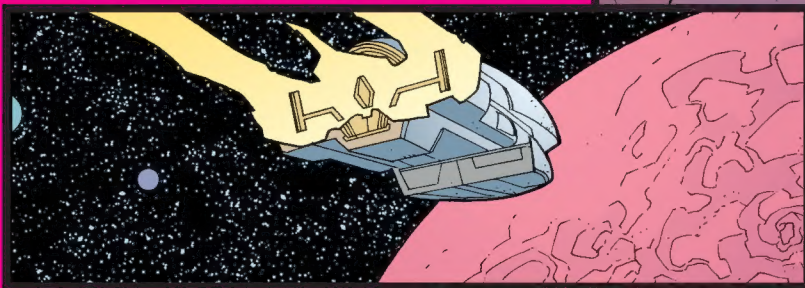


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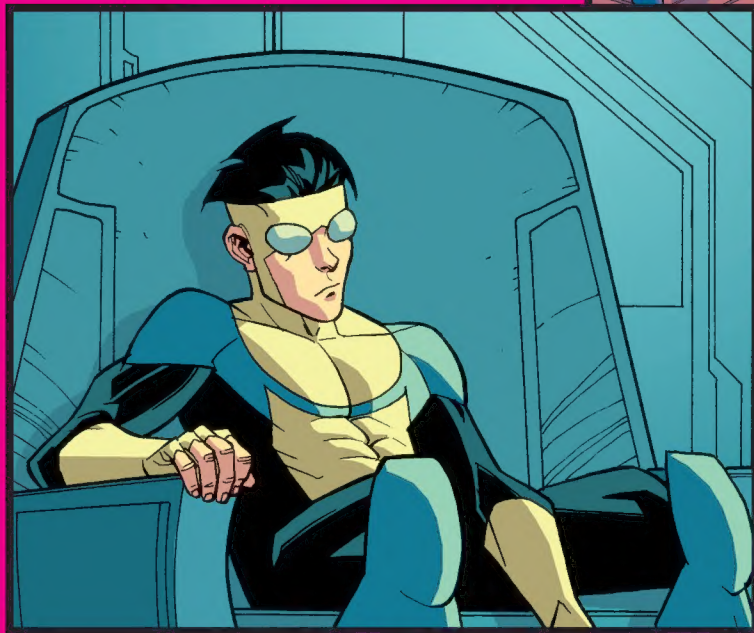
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